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ABSTRACT

This report presents an analysis of the effectiveness of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program in encouraging school attendance by pregnant and parenting teenagers on welfare. It describes LEAP as a statewide program that provides pregnant and parenting teenagers with financial incentives to go to school. The report's eight chapters are divided among three main parts: Introduction to LEAP and Its Evaluation; LEAP Program Operations; and LEAP Program Effects. Chapter 1 includes a brief description of the LEAP program model, a discussion of LEAP's policy significance and previous research in this area, and an explanation of the research design that underlies the evaluation of LEAP. Chapter 2 discusses the analysis plan and the study's data sources, and chapter 3 describes the sample. Chapter 4 provides an overview of program implementation between 1989 and 1992, and summarizes the lessons that can be drawn from this experience. Chapter 5 assesses the operation of LEAP and chapter 6 discusses the teenagers' perceptions of LEAP and its incentive structure, drawing on data from both surveys and focus group discussions. Chapter 7 considers the program's impact on school and adult education program enrollment, relying primarily on survey data. Chapter 8 examines effects on school attendance and provides early findings on school progress and completion, using both survey and school records data. Four appendices are included which provide further information and examine technical issues related to the data used in the analysis. (Numerous figures and tables supplement the text. Contains 40 references.) (Author/NB)

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LEAP

Interim Findings on a Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents

Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program

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LEAP

INTERIM FINDINGS ON A WELFARE INITIATIVE TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AMONG TEENAGE PARENTS

Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program

Dan Bloom
Veronica Fellerath
David Long
Robert G. Wood

Manpower Demonstration
Research Corporation

May 1993

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Sonsiere Cobb led the focus group discussions and commented on an early draft of the report.

The Authors

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PREFACE

This report, which presents the first evidence on the effectiveness of Ohio's LEAP program, speaks directly to two pressing tasks that are currently high on the nation's domestic policy agenda: reducing long-term welfare receipt and promoting high school graduation. LEAP targets a group – teenage mothers on welfare – who are critical to both objectives. More than half of current welfare households are headed by women who first gave birth as teens, and girls who drop out of school at the time of a pregnancy or birth account for a substantial proportion of female dropouts. The long-term costs associated with teenage childbearing are high, for the young parents, their children, and society.

The need to find effective strategies for LEAP's target group is magnified by the results of welfare-to-work programs for adults. These programs have generally had modest success, but they have not usually lifted participants out of poverty. In addition, the programs have typically been unable to raise the earnings of long-term welfare recipients. At the same time, little is yet known about the effectiveness of strategies that seek to inject education later, after people have been out of school and on welfare for many years. This argues for new strategies that can intervene early to prevent young mothers from becoming long-term welfare recipients. LEAP is one of the first efforts to do this on a large scale.

LEAP uses an unusual mix of financial incentives and penalties, case management, and support services to promote school attendance among pregnant and parenting teenagers on welfare. These results – based on a comparison of teens who were randomly assigned to either a program group (who were subject to LEAP) or a control group (who were not) – offer encouraging news about the model's potential. Among the key findings:

- LEAP prevented some in-school teens from dropping out and brought some dropouts back to school. In-school teens experienced a 10 percentage point increase in continuous school enrollment during the year after they became eligible for LEAP. For dropouts, there was a 13 percentage point increase in the rate at which teens returned to high school or entered adult education (GED preparation) programs.

- Recent dropouts (those who had left school within the past year) often returned to high school. Longer-term dropouts who resumed their education almost always entered adult education programs.

- LEAP improved the daily attendance of high school students. By contrast, LEAP dropouts who entered adult education programs were more inclined to choose classes that met less frequently, and were absent somewhat more than control group teens who were in these programs.
- Although the school completion story is not yet finished, early evidence indicates that LEAP may produce significant increases in high school graduation and GED receipt.
- LEAP incorporated most eligible teens into its incentive system. More than 90 percent of teens in the three largest counties in Ohio were scheduled for at least one bonus or sanction during their first 18 months in LEAP. Three-fourths earned at least one bonus; more than half were slated for at least one sanction.

Thus, while further study is necessary to determine whether these educational gains generate longer-term increases in employment and earnings and reductions in welfare receipt, the early evidence is promising. Furthermore, LEAP's cost appears to be relatively modest.

Of course, LEAP is not the whole answer. The program's long-term effectiveness depends heavily on teens' experiences in school, a factor largely beyond the reach of the welfare agencies that run LEAP. On the positive side, many Ohio teen parents who stay in school can benefit from GRADS, a program that provides teen parents with special classes and support. This may bolster LEAP's efforts. However, a disturbingly large proportion of LEAP teens, like their counterparts in urban areas across the country, describe their high schools as dangerous and unruly places where learning is difficult. Most dropouts refused to return to these schools. Although the causes of high dropout rates are clearly complex, these results point to the continued importance of efforts to improve the school environment for low-income youth.

Judith M. Gueron
President

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	Adult Basic Education
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
CDHS	County Departments of Human Services
CRIS-E	Client Registry Information System–Enhanced
GAIN	California's Greater Avenues for Independence Program
GED	General Educational Development certification (high school equivalency)
GRADS	Graduation, Reality and Dual-Role Skills
IM	Income Maintenance
JOBS	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act
LEAP	Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program
MDRC	Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation
ODHS	Ohio Department of Human Services
SYEP	Summer Youth Employment Program
TPIS	Teen Parent Information Sheet

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program is an unusual statewide initiative that uses financial incentives and penalties to promote school attendance among pregnant and parenting teenagers on welfare, the group most likely to become long-term welfare recipients. LEAP requires these teens to stay in school and attend regularly or, if they have dropped out, to return to school or enter a program to prepare for the GED (high school equivalency) test. By improving the teens' school attendance in the short term, LEAP seeks to increase the likelihood that they will complete school and, in the longer term, find jobs and leave welfare. The program, developed by the Ohio Department of Human Services (ODHS) and operated by County Departments of Human Services (CDHS), has reached more than 20,000 eligible teens since it began operating in mid-1989. LEAP has attracted substantial interest in Ohio, other states, and at the federal level.

This is the second report in a six-year evaluation of LEAP that began in 1989. The study is being conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) with funding from ODHS, the Ford Foundation, the George Gund Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, BP America, the Treu-Mart Fund, the Procter & Gamble Fund, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The report assesses the operation of LEAP and provides early evidence on the program's effects on school enrollment, attendance, and completion in seven Ohio counties that include about half of the statewide LEAP caseload. The evaluation's final report, which is scheduled to be completed by early 1995, will address the program's longer-term impacts.

The LEAP Model

Participation in LEAP is mandatory for all pregnant women and custodial parents (almost all are women) under 20 years old who are receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and do not have a high school diploma or GED certificate. This includes both teens who head welfare cases and those who receive assistance on someone else's case (usually the teen's mother).

Under program rules, all eligible teens are required to regularly attend a school or program leading to a high school diploma or GED. This applies both to teens who are in school when they become eligible for LEAP – they must remain enrolled – and to dropouts, who must return to high school or enter an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program to prepare for the GED test. LEAP uses a three-tiered incentive structure to enforce this mandate. First, teens who provide evidence that they are enrolled in a school or program receive a bonus payment of $62. They then receive an additional $62 in their welfare check for each month in which they meet the program's attendance requirements. For teens in a full-time high school, this means being absent no more than four times in the month, with two or fewer unexcused absences. (Absences for which the teen obtains a physician's statement are not counted.) Different attendance standards apply to part-time ABE programs, but the same financial incentives apply.

Second, teens who do not attend an initial LEAP assessment interview (which commences participation in LEAP) or fail to provide proof of school enrollment without an acceptable reason have $62 deducted from their grant (i.e., they are sanctioned) in every month until they comply with program rules. Similarly, enrolled teens are sanctioned $62 for each month in which they exceed the allowed number of unexcused absences.

Third, enrolled teens who exceed the allowed number of *total* absences but not the allowed number of *unexcused* absences in a month earn neither a bonus nor a sanction.

Because teens have several opportunities to provide evidence of "good cause" for absences that schools define as unexcused, there is a three-month lag between the month of attendance and the corresponding sanction or bonus; for example, poor attendance in October triggers a sanction in January. Teens may be temporarily exempted from the LEAP requirements if they are in the last seven months of a pregnancy, if they are caring for a child under three months old, if child care or transportation is unavailable, or for other specified reasons.

LEAP sanctions and bonuses can substantially change the income of participants. During most of the study period, a teen living on her own with one child (the most common situation) was eligible for a monthly AFDC grant of $274. A bonus raised her grant to $336. A sanction reduced it to $212. Thus, the total difference in AFDC payments between a teen who enrolled and attended regularly, and one who failed to enroll without a good reason, was $124 per month.

Each LEAP teen is assigned to a case manager, who is responsible for explaining the program's rules, monitoring the teen's compliance to determine whether a bonus or sanction is warranted, and helping the teen overcome barriers to school attendance. Teens are also eligible to receive assistance with child care and transportation as needed to attend school.

Under Ohio's county-administered welfare system, LEAP is operated by County Departments of Human Services in all 88 of the state's counties. Many aspects of the program's implementation, including the staffing structure and specific responsibilities of case managers, are left to the discretion of counties.

The Policy Significance of LEAP

LEAP is an important initiative for three reasons. First, the program attacks a critical social problem – long-term welfare receipt – by encouraging and assisting teen parents on welfare to stay in or return to school. Recent data show that more than half of all welfare households are headed by women who first gave birth as teens, and that the route from adolescent childbearing to long-term welfare receipt often begins when pregnant or parenting teens drop out of school. This is not surprising given the growing disparity between the earnings of high school graduates and dropouts. In addition, teenagers who drop out at the time of their first pregnancy or birth account for a substantial proportion of all female dropouts, making this population important to broader efforts to increase school completion rates.

Second, unlike most other programs for this population, LEAP operates on a large scale and targets an unusually broad group of teens. It is only the second statewide effort to enforce a school attendance mandate for all teen parents on welfare, including those who are already in school. The first, Wisconsin's Learnfare program, targets all teens on welfare (not just those who are parents), uses only grant reductions, and did not initially include case management. Until recently, most initiatives for teen parents were small-scale programs serving volunteers; welfare agencies rarely targeted programs to this group. The Family Support Act, the major welfare reform legislation passed by Congress in 1988, urges all states to target teen parents on welfare for services and to require school attendance. However, few states have moved as aggressively as Ohio.

Third, LEAP's approach, which uses both financial incentives and penalties to encourage teens to use existing education services, is unique. Programs that seek to change the behavior of welfare recipients through financial inducements have attracted wide attention in recent years, although little is known about their effectiveness. An exception is programs that use the threat of welfare grant reductions to encourage employment and participation in education and employment-related activities. Rigorous evaluations have shown that these programs can be effective for adults, although it is not known how much these impacts were driven by the use of sanctions versus the services that were provided. However, LEAP's use of both financial incentives and penalties, and its application of these inducements to all eligible teens on an ongoing basis, constitutes an important departure from past practices.

The findings from this report, along with results from other ongoing evaluations of interventions for teen parents, will help inform the search for effective policy approaches for this important population. In the context of these findings, it is critical to note that LEAP, unlike some other existing or proposed "learnfare" strategies, targets only teenage custodial parents, and represents an integrated "package," including both financial incentives and penalties, case management, child care and transportation assistance, and extensive due process procedures that provide opportunities for teens to respond before grant reductions are imposed. Thus, the results do not offer evidence on the effectiveness of other learnfare approaches that include only parts of the LEAP package, such as financial penalties alone.

An Overview of the Findings

LEAP has operated relatively smoothly during its first three years. However, because the evaluation began at the same time LEAP operations commenced, most of the teens in the study experienced LEAP at least partly during the early months of the program's operation, when there were start-up problems and the financial incentives operated least efficiently. Since the evidence suggests that LEAP operations have become smoother over time, the results presented here should be seen as a conservative estimate of the model's potential.

Despite the early implementation problems, LEAP has incorporated most eligible teens into its incentive structure. LEAP staff requested at least one bonus or sanction for 93 percent of eligible teens in the three largest counties in Ohio during the first 18 months after these teens entered the program. Seventy-five percent of eligible teens earned at least one bonus, and 56 percent were slated for at least one sanction (many teens earned both bonuses and sanctions). However, it is important to note that, for several legitimate reasons, teens generally did not qualify for grant adjustments in every month; about half were scheduled for six or more actions over the 18 months. In addition, especially during the early months of program operations, many of the sanctions that were requested by LEAP staff did not actually lead to grant reductions because of administrative problems.

LEAP has also made substantial progress toward its key short-term goal of inducing teens to enroll in or remain enrolled in school. This report's impact analysis, which compares the experiences of LEAP teens (the program group) to those of a randomly selected group of similar teens (the control group), found that the program affected both teens who were already enrolled in school when they became eligible for LEAP, making them less likely to drop out, and teens who were initially dropouts, making them more likely to return to school or enter adult education programs.

Among teens who were already enrolled in school when they became eligible for LEAP (about half of all teens), 61.3 percent of the program group and 51.1 percent of the control group remained enrolled continuously (or graduated) during the 12 months after entering LEAP. This difference – 10.3 percentage points (after rounding) – represents a statistically significant increase in school *retention.*

Among teens who were dropouts when they entered LEAP, 46.8 percent of program group members and 33.4 percent of controls enrolled in a high school or adult education program at some point during the following 12 months. This 13.4 percentage point impact on school *return* is also statistically significant. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, even with the LEAP incentives and penalties, more than half the dropouts never returned to school during the first year.

The pattern of school return impacts varied depending on how long dropouts had been out of school when they were identified as eligible for LEAP. Among recent dropouts (those who had been out of school less than a year), many of those who resumed their schooling because of LEAP returned to high school. In contrast, among longer-term dropouts, virtually all of those who returned entered part-time adult education programs rather than full-time high schools.

Importantly, these impact estimates include many teens who already met the LEAP eligibility criteria when the program began. When compared with teens who became eligible for LEAP after operations began, these "on-board" teens were more likely to have been out of school a year or more and to have had two or more children at the point they were brought into LEAP. Teens with these characteristics had smaller overall impacts, took longer to respond to the LEAP incentives, and, when they did, were likely to enter adult education programs rather than high schools. In an ongoing program, teens would generally be identified closer to the time they become parents and, as a result, fewer would enter the program as school dropouts or as the parents of more than one child. This, together with the improvement in program operations during the study period, suggests that LEAP's impacts might have been larger if they had been measured for an ongoing program.

In addition to promoting retention in high school and inducing some dropouts to return to these schools, LEAP also improved the *attendance* of teens enrolled in high school. In contrast, program group teens who enrolled in adult education programs attended those programs somewhat *less* than controls. However, because many more program group than control group teens enrolled in adult education programs, the total number of days attended was greater for the program group.

Finally, early evidence on school completion suggests that LEAP's success in promoting high school enrollment and retention may ultimately translate into comparable increases in high school graduation. In addition, the program has already produced a small but statistically significant increase in the proportion of teens taking and passing the GED test. However, the evidence on LEAP's impact on graduation and GED receipt is necessarily preliminary because many of the teens studied in the analysis were not old enough to have graduated or obtained a GED during the study period. In addition, at this early point in the study, it is unclear whether impacts on school completion will translate into longer-term effects on employment, earnings, or welfare receipt.

The LEAP Evaluation

The LEAP evaluation, which began in 1989, includes a randomly selected group of 12 of Ohio's 88 counties. This report focuses on seven of these counties, which include Ohio's three largest cities – Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati – as well as suburban and rural areas. Although they encompass about half of the statewide LEAP caseload, it should be noted that these seven counties are mostly urban, and therefore underrepresent LEAP teens in rural areas. The seven counties are: Cuyahoga (Cleveland), Franklin (Columbus), Hamilton (Cincinnati), Lucas (Toledo), Stark (Canton), and two smaller, rural counties, Lawrence and Muskingum.

The evaluation uses a random assignment research design to assess LEAP's effectiveness. To implement this design, all teens who were found to be eligible for LEAP in the research counties from the time the program began operating in July 1989 through September 1991 – just over 7,000 individuals in the seven counties – were assigned, at random, to one of two groups: a program group, which was eligible for LEAP's incentives and case management, or a control group, which was not. LEAP staff did not work with teens in the control group or monitor their school absences, and these teens' welfare grants were not adjusted based on their attendance. Also, control group teens were ineligible for payments (other than for child care) or case management from Ohio's Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program for adult welfare recipients. Because teens were assigned to the program and control groups at random, there were no systematic differences between them except for the fact that one group was subject to the LEAP mandate and the other was not. Thus, as the evaluation tracks members of the groups over time, any measured differences between them in school behavior, employment, earnings, AFDC receipt, or other outcomes, can be attributed to LEAP.

This analysis uses a wide variety of data sources – including a survey of a random subset of more than 2,000 program and control group teens, LEAP and AFDC casefiles, records obtained from selected school districts, statewide GED testing data, and discussions with small groups of LEAP teens – to assess LEAP's operations and its impacts on teens' school enrollment, attendance, and completion during their first 12 to 18 months in the program. The analysis focuses most heavily on the three largest urban counties, where the most complete data were available.

Findings on Program Implementation

One goal of the evaluation is to describe how the LEAP model has been translated into an operating program at the county level, and to examine the key issues that have emerged during the first two to three years of operations. This topic was the primary focus of MDRC's first report on LEAP, and is updated in this report. Key findings include the following:

- **LEAP has operated relatively smoothly during the study period, considering that the program is complex to administer. Not surprisingly, all counties experienced operational problems, particularly during the start-up period.**

The LEAP model requires a variety of complex linkages, within and across agencies, that generally did not exist prior to the program's implementation. For example, monitoring teens' attendance necessitates close cooperation between schools and welfare agencies, and implementing welfare grant adjustments requires coordination across divisions of a county welfare agency. Because the planning period preceding LEAP's implementation was extremely compressed, the research counties were forced to develop these linkages – and to deal with other formidable challenges – under intense pressure, with little relevant experience on which to build.

Given these challenging circumstances, it is noteworthy that all of the research counties were able to begin operations roughly on schedule and that, despite a range of problems, they have managed to identify large numbers of eligible teens, obtain attendance information for most of those in school, and implement large numbers of grant adjustments. Perhaps more important, the counties have made steady progress in addressing the key problems, and operations have become smoother over time. However, as noted earlier, most of the teens who are studied in this analysis experienced LEAP at least in part during the less efficient start-up period.

- **LEAP has reached a large and diverse population of teens. However, identifying eligible teens – particularly those who do not head welfare cases – was quite difficult, in large part because of the limitations of the welfare computer system.**

More than 7,000 teens were identified as eligible for LEAP during the first two years of program operations in the seven counties studied for this report. This was an extremely diverse group, including 18- and 19-year-olds, who were quite likely to have two or more children and to have been out of school for more than a year, and younger teens who had one child and were still enrolled in school when they entered the program. Overall, about half the eligible teens reported being enrolled in school when they were identified as eligible for LEAP.

The process of identifying the eligible population was more difficult than many expected, in large part because the statewide welfare computer system that was in place for much of the study period did not have the capacity to identify teen parents who did not head welfare cases. Many eligible teens were missed, especially during the early months. Counties developed a number of strategies to address this problem, but it persisted in some counties until a new, highly sophisticated statewide welfare computer system was implemented near the end of the study period.

- **Most of the counties had difficulties processing needed grant adjustments. The severity of this problem varied, depending on the organizational structure of LEAP in each county.**

In developing organizational structures to operate LEAP, counties faced the challenge of integrating diverse functions that are traditionally handled by different parts of a welfare agency. Most of the counties chose to separate the two key LEAP functions – case management and welfare grant adjustment – assigning responsibility for case management to staff experienced in employment or social services programs, and grant adjustment to regular AFDC eligibility workers. Under this structure, LEAP case managers had to use paper forms to request grant adjustments from AFDC workers. Each of these workers was responsible for a handful of LEAP clients in a caseload of 300 or more, and many were barely familiar with LEAP. Especially during the first year of operations, this process did not operate smoothly in several of these counties and, consequently, many teens who did not comply with program rules were not sanctioned. Where LEAP case management responsibility was assigned to AFDC workers directly, this was not nearly as serious a problem.

Once again, this situation has improved over time, as county and state staff have devised new strategies to address the problem. In addition, the implementation of the new statewide computer system has streamlined and largely automated the grant adjustment process.

- **Several counties have gone beyond the requirements of the LEAP model to create a relatively expansive definition of the case management function.**

The LEAP regulations do not define the role of case managers in detail, beyond the basic monitoring and administrative steps necessary to implement the financial incentive system. While a few of the research counties have chosen to define the responsibilities of these staff narrowly, most have attempted to go beyond the basic model to provide proactive assistance to at least a subset of LEAP teens. In a few counties, these efforts have included frequent personal contact with teens, home visits, outstationing of LEAP staff in schools, group activities, or other measures. In general, proactive case management has been easier to achieve in counties where this role was assigned to more experienced staff. More extensive training was necessary in counties where AFDC workers became case managers.

- **School districts have generally cooperated with LEAP. Still, it often has been difficult for LEAP staff to establish reliable attendance reporting systems.**

Despite the lack of preexisting linkages between county welfare agencies and schools, and the unusual nature of the LEAP model, the vast majority of school districts in the research counties have been willing to supply the attendance information necessary to trigger LEAP's incentives and penalties. However, the process of establishing and maintaining reliable monitoring systems has been extremely complex and time-consuming, and these systems have sometimes functioned poorly. Especially during the early months of program operations, attendance reports often arrived too late to implement the grant adjustments on schedule. Reporting problems have been most severe in large urban areas and for teens attending ABE programs; these programs traditionally served volunteers, and did not always maintain detailed individual attendance records. As with other implementation problems, attendance reporting has generally improved over time, as counties have devised new organizational approaches and school staff have become more familiar with LEAP.

- **Because it provides no education services, LEAP is dependent on the local school environment, which varies across counties and school districts. One particularly important factor in the operation of LEAP is the availability and accessibility of alternatives to traditional high school.**

Many LEAP teens who have dropped out of school have failed in the mainstream education system and are extremely reluctant to return to traditional high schools. For these teens, the availability of education alternatives can be a critical determinant of LEAP's success. In most counties, ABE programs, which help students prepare for the GED test, are the most common alternatives. However, owing to the interaction of state and federal laws, teens under 18 years old are not permitted to enroll in these programs unless they have officially withdrawn from school, and the frequency with which teens are permitted to withdraw varies considerably across school districts. Thus, the menu of available education options differs across counties, as does the involvement of LEAP staff in steering teens toward particular educational choices.

Another important aspect of the local school context is a preexisting Ohio Department of Education initiative known as GRADS (Graduation, Reality and Dual-Role Skills), which funds and trains home economics teachers to provide special instruction to pregnant and parenting students in nearly 600 Ohio schools. Although GRADS is not formally linked to LEAP (and is also available to teens in the control group), the caseloads and missions of the two programs overlap, and the LEAP and GRADS staff have developed close working relationships in many schools. GRADS has greatly aided LEAP in establishing linkages with schools, and the efforts of GRADS teachers may also contribute to LEAP's ability to encourage teens to stay in school and obtain their diplomas. This, in turn, may bolster the program's longer-term effects on employment and self-sufficiency. Two-thirds of LEAP teens who were attending high school reported that they were enrolled in GRADS.

- **LEAP has largely avoided the legal challenges that initially hindered the Learnfare program in Wisconsin, which includes only grant reductions. It is likely that this has resulted in part from specific aspects of LEAP's design.**

LEAP's inclusion of bonuses and case management in addition to sanctions may make it more acceptable to eligible teens and their families and critics of programs that sanction welfare recipients. In addition, the program's due process procedures, which give teens opportunities to respond before sanctions are taken, have probably avoided numerous erroneous sanctions. However, this lengthy process is also partly responsible for the long (three-month) lag between the teens' attendance behavior and the financial response, which may weaken the ability of the bonuses and penalties to change behavior.

Findings on Bonus and Sanction Rates

The assessment of LEAP operations, which focused on Ohio's three largest counties – Cuyahoga (Cleveland), Franklin (Columbus), and Hamilton (Cincinnati) – shows that the program's incentive structure has incorporated most eligible teen parents. It also indicates that program operations improved over time, which means that teens were exposed to a more efficient and predictable structure during the 1991-92 school year than the one they faced during 1989-90. Specific findings include:

- **The vast majority of teens have been scheduled for at least one bonus or sanction during the time they have been eligible for LEAP. More teens earned bonuses than sanctions.**

LEAP staff requested at least one bonus or sanction for 93 percent of eligible teens in the three largest counties at some point in the 18 months following confirmation of these teens' eligibility for

LEAP.[1] For 100 typical LEAP teens, as depicted in Figure 1, 37 qualified for bonuses only, 18 were scheduled for sanctions only, 38 earned both bonuses and grant reductions, and only 7 did not qualify for either a bonus or a sanction during the 18-month period covered by the study. Among the 38 teens who were slated for both bonuses and sanctions, 14 earned more bonuses, 18 were slated for more sanctions, and 6 qualified for an equal number of each. Thus, overall, 75 percent of teens earned at least one bonus, and 56 percent were scheduled for at least one sanction.

- **Although almost all teens earned at least one grant adjustment, many were not scheduled for large numbers of adjustments during their time in LEAP.**

LEAP staff requested 3.5 bonus payments and 2.8 sanctions per eligible teen during the 18 months covered by the study. About half of the teens were scheduled for six or more grant adjustments during this period. This means that in a typical month more than one-quarter of all teens were slated for bonuses, and about one-fifth were scheduled for sanctions. It is important to note that a substantial fraction of bonuses were for initial enrollment in school, rather than for good attendance.

These data suggest that, in a typical month, about half of all eligible teens were not scheduled for either a bonus or a sanction. Aside from administrative problems, there are a number of legitimate reasons why this might occur. First, as noted earlier, teens with large numbers of excused absences in a month may qualify for neither a sanction nor a bonus. Second, about one-third of the teens were exempt at some point; exemptions were more likely to be granted after a 1990 rule change created an exemption for pregnancy (a large fraction of teens became pregnant or had additional children at some point after entering the program). Third, bonuses and sanctions generally do not apply to the summer months, when school is not in session. Thus, one would not expect teens to earn bonuses or sanctions in all of their eligible months.

- **There are important differences across counties, both in the rates of sanction and bonus requests and in the proportion of requested adjustments that actually occurred.**

Among the three counties studied in this part of the analysis, the fraction of teens who were scheduled for at least one sanction during the 18 months following eligibility determination ranged from 50 percent in Cuyahoga County to 64 percent in Hamilton County. Rates of bonus requests

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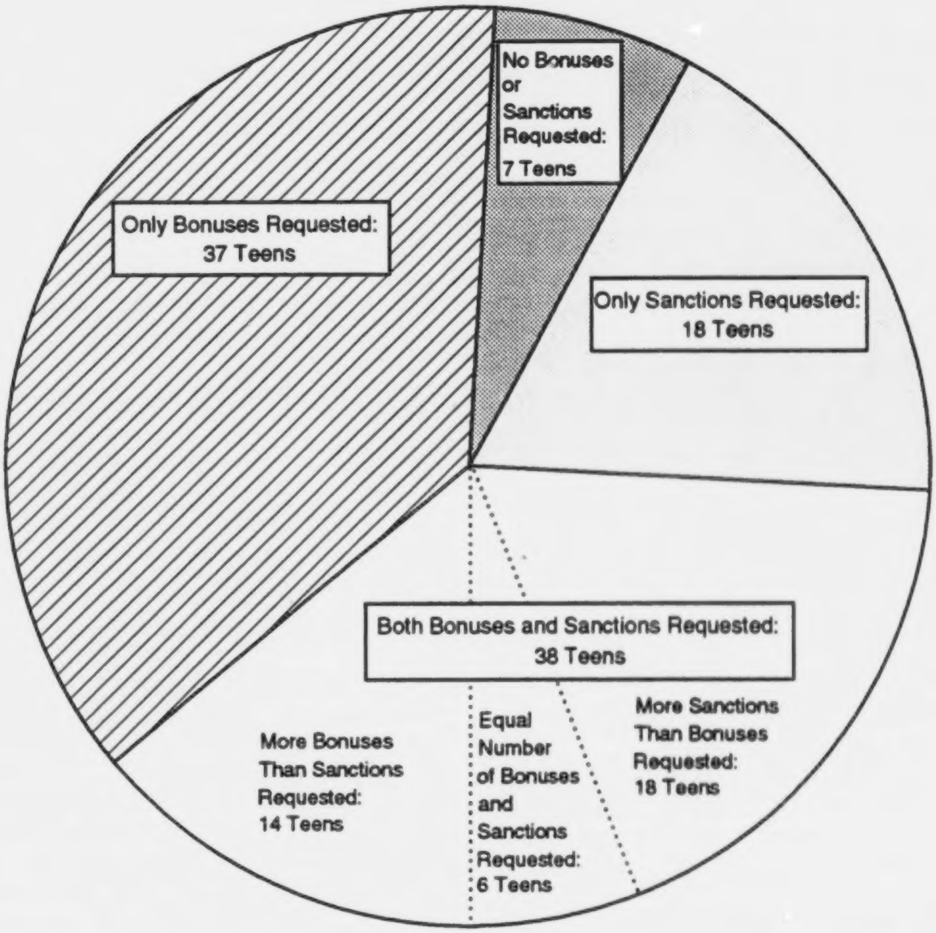
[1] This analysis focuses primarily on grant adjustment requests, rather than actual adjustments, so as not to give undue weight to the early operational period, when there was a disparity between the two in some counties.

FIGURE 1

BONUS AND SANCTION REQUESTS FOR 100 TYPICAL LEAP TEENS WITHIN 18 MONTHS OF ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION



NOTE: Numbers are weighted averages reflecting 263 randomly selected teens in three counties (Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton) who were assigned to the program group through November 1990.

also varied. County variation in the percentage of teens earning bonuses and sanctions was affected by a variety of factors including teen behavior, county practices in granting exemptions and responding to noncompliance, and the ability of counties to obtain attendance information.

As described in the previous section, LEAP case managers in most counties are not directly responsible for processing grant adjustments and, in some counties, staff report that adjustments requested by LEAP staff are frequently not applied. The data support this contention, but suggest that the severity of the problem varied by county. Among the three largest counties, the problem was particularly serious in Cuyahoga County, where only about half the requested sanctions were actually processed during the study period. However, there is evidence that the gap between requested and actual adjustments narrowed considerably over time. In addition, as noted earlier, the implementation of a new statewide computer system led to further improvement after the period covered by this study.

The teens' responses to the survey, which covered all seven counties, suggest that the proportion of teens who were actually sanctioned – which reflects both the patterns of sanction requests and the likelihood that these requests were processed – also varied considerably across the seven counties.

- **Some teens were scheduled for many sanctions and never cooperated with LEAP.**

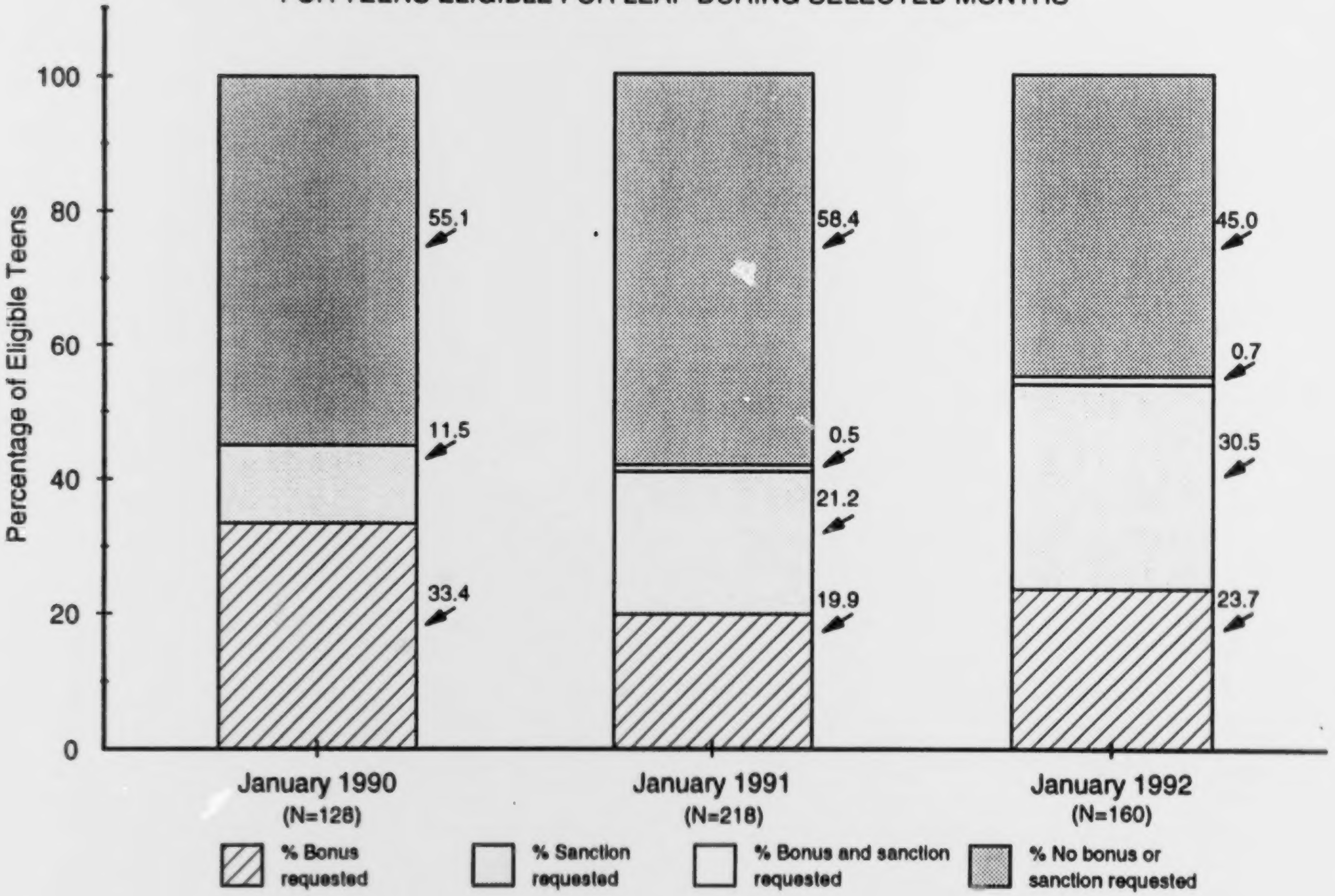
Thirteen percent of LEAP teens qualified for four or more sanctions and no bonuses during the first 18 months following eligibility determination, and most of these sanctions resulted in grant reductions. This group was made up largely of teens who had dropped out of school more than a year prior to entering LEAP. Clearly, the LEAP model had little effect on the behavior of these teens. However, it is important to note that longer-term dropouts should account for a smaller share of the teens entering LEAP now that the "on-board" group has been brought into the program.

- **There have been important changes in the operation of the financial incentive system over time.**

Figure 2 shows that in January 1990, six months after LEAP started, neither a bonus nor a sanction was requested for more than half the eligible teens in the three largest counties. Sanctions were requested for one in nine teens (less than half of these sanctions were acted upon), while bonuses were requested for one in three teens. Two years later, in January 1992, actions were requested for a majority of teens, the sanction request rate had more than doubled (and most requested sanctions resulted in grant reductions), and the bonus request rate had declined to a level

FIGURE 2

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF BONUS AND SANCTION REQUESTS FOR TEENS ELIGIBLE FOR LEAP DURING SELECTED MONTHS



NOTE: Bonus and sanction rates are weighted to reflect the sizes of the full research samples in Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties. The figures are based on a random sample of 368 program group teens. Not all of these teens were eligible for LEAP in all three of the specified months.

that was lower than the rate for sanctions. The drop in bonus requests is attributable in part to the fact that, during the early months of program operation, bonuses were issued to enrolled teens when the program could not obtain school attendance records (in accordance with program rules). In addition, during these early months, a relatively large fraction of the total caseload was in its first months of eligibility, and teens tend to earn enrollment bonuses fairly quickly upon entering the program.

- **Largely because of the program's unusual design, LEAP's sanctioning rate was much higher than the rates measured in previous evaluations of welfare-to-work programs for adults.**

The proportion of LEAP teens for whom sanctions were requested was more than three times the highest sanction rates MDRC has estimated for mandatory employment and training programs for adult welfare recipients. This result is not surprising because LEAP generally demands a more profound behavioral change than these earlier programs, monitors compliance and applies sanctions more regularly, and provides fewer options for case managers in responding to noncompliance. It may be noted that Wisconsin's Learnfare program and a recent test program for teen parents in three cities have also recorded high sanction rates.

In addition, as shown in Figure 1, more than half of the LEAP teens who qualified for sanctions also earned bonuses. Fewer than one-fifth of teens were slated *only* for sanctions. Overall, more than half of teens experienced a net gain because they earned more bonuses than sanctions; about a third experienced a net loss.

- **Overall, in a survey, about half of eligible teens characterized LEAP as "fair" and a third called it "unfair." Not surprisingly, teens who had been sanctioned had much more negative views of the program than did other teens.**

In responding to the survey, 49 percent of program group teens judged LEAP to be fair, and another 17 percent thought LEAP was sometimes fair and sometimes unfair. Thirty-four percent thought the program was unfair. In small group discussions, some teens seemed to feel that the LEAP rules are fair, but also that there are problems in the application of these rules. For example, teens said they knew of instances in which the grants of clearly noncompliant teens had not been reduced, and they voiced frustration that bonuses and transportation checks earned by good students were often delayed. However, it was not always clear whether the teens who expressed these grievances fully understood the program rules.

Among teens who had been sanctioned by LEAP, the proportion who thought LEAP was unfair exceeded the proportion who thought it was fair. In the group discussions, some teens expressed resentment that they had no choice in whether or not to enroll in LEAP.

- **Many teens report that child care arrangements are critically important to their decisions about school attendance. However, most LEAP teens did not use child care assistance offered by the program.**

When out-of-school teens in both the program and control groups were asked for the main reason why they were not enrolled, lack of suitable child care was cited most frequently. However, when surveyed, fewer than one-fifth of in-school teens in the program and control groups reported using LEAP-funded child care: most relied on their own mothers or other relatives to provide care. (LEAP-funded child care is also available to teens in the control group who attend school.) This low utilization rate is attributable to a number of factors, including teens' preferences for informal care provided by relatives and Ohio rules that restrict reimbursement to certified or licensed providers. It is not clear how these child care utilization patterns are affecting teens' school attendance, although many enrolled teens reported missing school because of child care problems.

Findings on Program Impacts

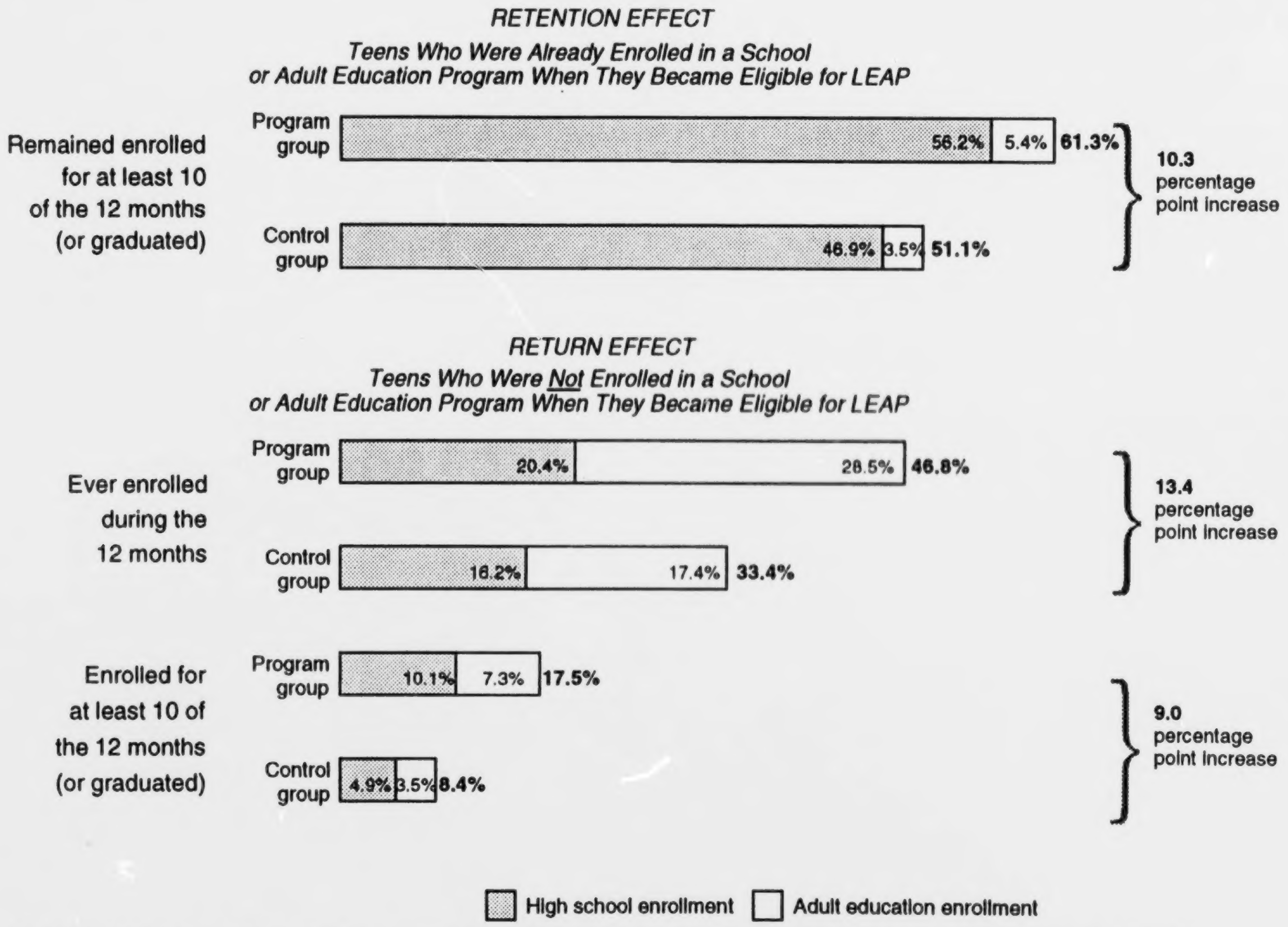
To determine the effects of LEAP on school behavior, the experience of teens who were randomly assigned to the program group was compared to that of teens who were randomly assigned to the control group. The *differences* between the two groups – in terms of enrollment, attendance, and completion – are the impacts of the program. The key results include:

- **LEAP had two important and statistically significant effects on teens' enrollment in high schools and adult education programs: It increased school *retention* among in-school teens and induced many dropouts to *return* to a school or program.**
- **Most teens who were recent dropouts and resumed their schooling because of LEAP returned to high school. Longer-term dropouts who returned almost always entered adult education programs.**

As indicated in Figure 3, 61.3 percent of LEAP teens who were enrolled in a school or adult education program when they became eligible for LEAP reported that they remained continuously enrolled – i.e., enrolled for at least 10 of the next 12 months (allowing that teens may not have been enrolled during summer months) or graduated within the 12-month period. Of their counterparts in

FIGURE 3

LEAP's FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON HIGH SCHOOL AND ADULT EDUCATION RETENTION AND RETURN



NOTE: The high school and adult education figures do not always sum to the total enrollment figures. This is true for several reasons, including the fact that teens could have been enrolled in both types of education during the period. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculated differences.

the control group, 51.1 percent were continuously enrolled. This 10.3 percentage point difference (after rounding) is statistically significant. As shown in the figure, most of this impact on retention was concentrated on high school enrollment.

Among teens who were not enrolled when they became eligible for LEAP, a significantly larger fraction of the program group returned to school or entered an adult education program within the first year: 46.8 percent of LEAP teens who were dropouts returned, compared to 33.4 percent of controls. Moreover, many of these dropouts resumed their education very quickly – quickly enough to have been enrolled for at least 10 of their first 12 months in LEAP – as evidenced by the statistically significant 9.0 percentage point increase in the proportion of dropouts who were enrolled for at least 10 months.

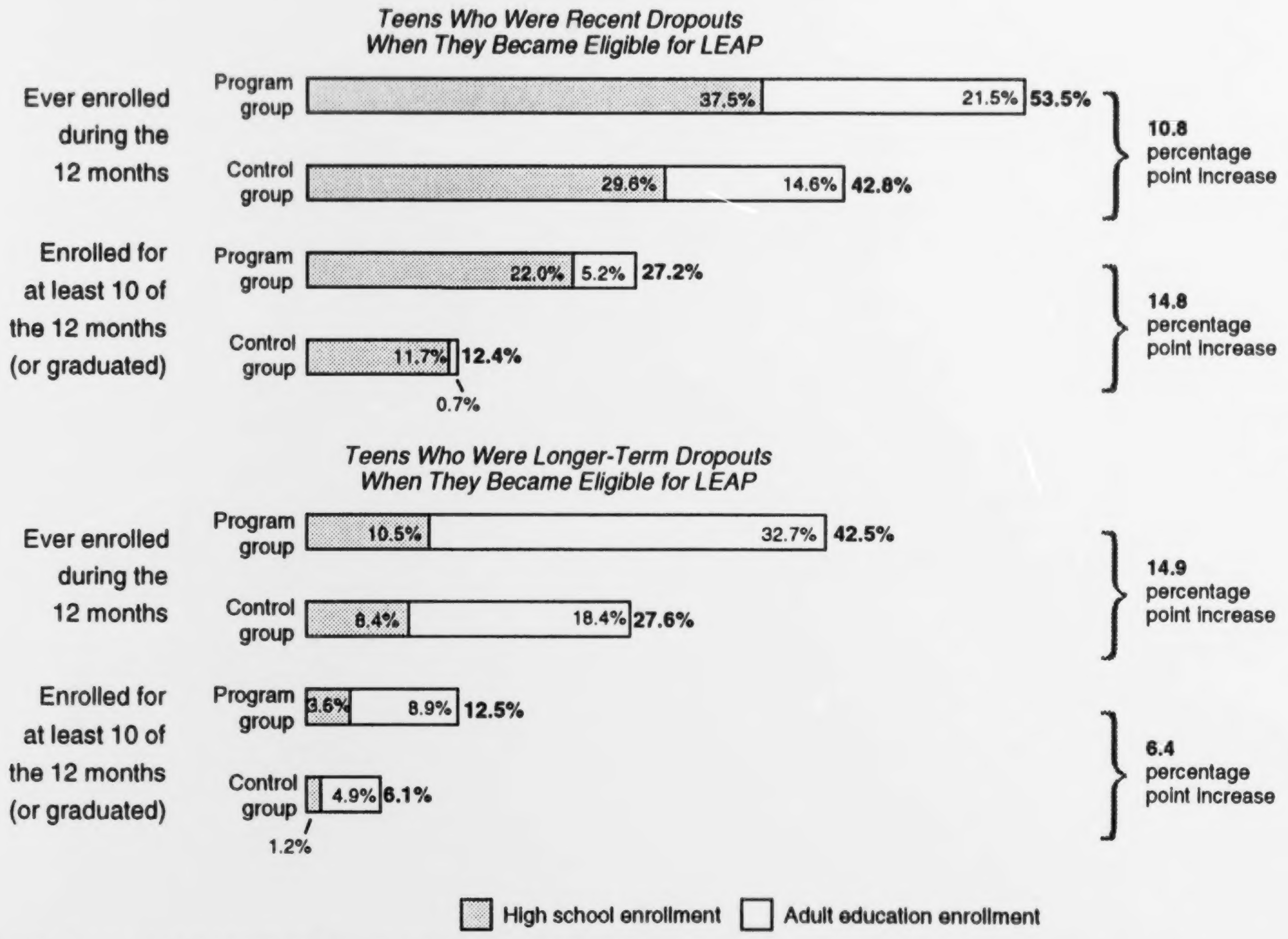
As shown in Figure 4, both the magnitude and the make-up of LEAP's impacts on dropouts depended on how long the teens had been out of school at the time they became eligible for LEAP. Among recent dropouts (i.e., those out of school less than a year), 53.5 percent of LEAP teens returned to school or entered an adult education program within the first year, compared to 42.8 percent of controls; and most of the teens who resumed their education returned to high school. Moreover, more than half of the returnees enrolled quickly enough to record at least 10 months of enrollment during the period. In contrast, 42.5 percent of longer-term dropouts in the program group (i.e., those out of school one or more years) resumed their schooling, compared to 27.6 percent of longer-term dropouts in the control group. In this case, however, teens took longer to respond to LEAP (indicated by the fact that less than one-third of the returnees were enrolled for 10 or more months), and the vast majority of those who returned because of LEAP enrolled in adult education programs, not high schools.

Table 1 presents some of the material above in tabular form, and also shows LEAP's impact on the number of months teens were enrolled in school or an adult education program – a measure that captures both LEAP's retention and return effects. For teens who were already enrolled when they became eligible for LEAP, the program increased their average months enrolled from 7.3 to 8.3 during the first year, a 13 percent improvement that was statistically significant. For dropouts, the increase in months enrolled, from 1.9 to 3.2 months, constituted a 68 percent improvement and was also statistically significant.

- **LEAP's impact on enrollment was significant for most subgroups of eligible teens. However, LEAP appears to have been less effective for older teens and those who had two or more children when they were identified as eligible for the program.**

FIGURE 4

LEAP's FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON SCHOOL RETURN FOR DROPOUTS



NOTE: The high school and adult education figures do not always sum to the total enrollment figures. This is true for several reasons, including the fact that teens could have been enrolled in both types of education during the period. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculated differences.

TABLE 1

LEAP's FIRST-YEAR IMPACTS ON SCHOOL AND ADULT EDUCATION ENROLLMENT

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Teens who were initially enrolled in a school or program			
Enrolled (or completed) 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or adult education	61.3	51.1	10.3 ***
High school	56.2	46.9	9.3 **
Adult education	5.4	3.5	1.9
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or adult education	8.3	7.3	0.9 **
High school	7.3	6.6	0.7 *
Adult education	0.9	0.7	0.3
Teens who were initially not enrolled in a school or program			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or adult education	46.8	33.4	13.4 ***
High school	20.4	16.2	4.3
Adult education	28.5	17.4	11.1 ***
Enrolled (or completed) 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or adult education	17.5	8.4	9.0 ***
High school	10.1	4.9	5.2 **
Adult education	7.3	3.5	3.8 *
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or adult education	3.2	1.9	1.3 ***
High school	1.5	1.0	0.5 *
Adult education	1.7	0.9	0.8 ***

NOTES: This table is based on the survey responses of 1,188 teens in the program and control groups.

"Completion" refers to high school graduation or GED receipt. A teen who achieved either outcome is counted as "enrolled" or "already completed" for the month of graduation (or GED receipt) and all subsequent months. For example, if a teen was enrolled in month 1, and then graduated in month 4, she is counted as enrolled (or completed) for all 12 months.

The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in adult education programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or adult education because teens may have enrolled in both types of education.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculated differences.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

LEAP was most likely to affect teens who were under age 18 when they became eligible for the program (age-specific results are not shown in tables). Teens who were 12 to 15 years old when they started LEAP were enrolled, on average, for 1.8 more months than controls during their first year. Since most of these teens were already in school when they became eligible for LEAP, this difference almost entirely reflects increased retention of teens in junior high or high school. For 16- and 17-year-olds, the impact was similar – 1.5 more months of enrollment – but is attributable both to high school retention and to increased enrollment among dropouts in schools and adult education programs. In contrast, LEAP teens who were 18 or 19, who were quite likely to be dropouts at the point they entered LEAP, were enrolled for only half a month more than controls, and this effect was limited to additional months of enrollment in adult education programs. There was no effect on high school enrollment for these older teens. In addition, LEAP was much more effective for teens who were pregnant with their first child, or had only one child, when they became eligible for the program, than for teens with two or more children.

- **LEAP had a consistent overall impact on enrollment across counties. However, the composition of this impact – i.e., the proportion of the effect that is attributable to high school versus adult education program enrollment – varied substantially, partly owing to school district policies.**

Differences in LEAP's overall impact on enrollment across counties, which were relatively small, reflect differences in county operations – such as grant adjustment performance – as well as in the characteristics of the teens they served. For example, analysis shows that county impacts are correlated with the proportion of teens who experienced grant adjustments in each county.

Overall county impacts reflect effects on both high school and adult education program enrollment. In individual counties, this effect was often concentrated in one type of enrollment or the other. To some extent, these differences appear to reflect school policies in the largest school districts in the counties. For example, in Cuyahoga County, most of the impact was in high school enrollment; this probably reflects the Cleveland Public Schools' policy of not allowing teenagers to enroll in adult education programs until they reach age 18. In contrast, LEAP did not induce dropouts to return to high school in Lucas County, but it had a relatively large impact on adult education program enrollment, partly because during the study period, the Toledo Public Schools more readily allowed younger teens to withdraw from high school to enroll in adult education programs.

- **The impact estimates probably understate the effects that would be found in an ongoing LEAP program because the groups of teens for whom LEAP had slight impacts were larger during the period covered by this study than they will be later in the program's operation.**

When LEAP began, several thousand teens statewide already met the program's eligibility requirements. Many of these teens had more than one child or had been out of school more than a year when they were brought into LEAP. As noted earlier, LEAP had smaller impacts on teens with two or more children, and its effects on longer-term dropouts were delayed and almost entirely reflected enrollment in adult education programs. As LEAP continues to operate, teens should be brought into the program closer to the time they become eligible and, consequently, teens with these characteristics should become a smaller proportion of the LEAP caseload. Thus, the effectiveness of an ongoing LEAP program, especially in promoting high school enrollment, is likely to improve over time.

- **In addition to promoting enrollment and retention, LEAP improved the daily attendance of teens enrolled in high school. Among teens who enrolled in adult education programs, LEAP teens attended less than controls. However, there was still an overall small positive impact on total attendance in these programs.**

Attendance, which LEAP's incentives directly promote, is a crucial link between the program's enrollment impacts and its potential effects on graduation and GED completion. Table 2 compares the attendance of LEAP and control group teens during a typical four-week period during the 1990-91 and 1991-92 school years (the period depends on when a teen became eligible for LEAP). These data provide a "snapshot" of enrollment and attendance at a point in time, just as Figure 2 provided a point-in-time view of aggregate LEAP bonus and sanction requests. As a result, the proportion of teens who are shown to be enrolled in school *at this point* is lower, for both LEAP and control group teens, than in Table 1 or Figures 3 and 4, which all cover *a full year.*

As illustrated in Table 2, LEAP's impact on school retention and dropout reenrollment together translate into a moderately large difference in enrollment during this brief period: 44.7 percent of LEAP teens were enrolled in a school or adult education program compared to 34.0 percent of controls. This would produce a comparable difference in the number of days attended for the program group if LEAP and control group teens *who enrolled* attended at exactly the same rate. In fact, program group enrollees' attendance was slightly better than that of control group enrollees (13.3 days versus 13.0 days). Thus, as shown in the shaded columns, LEAP teens' overall attendance, 5.9 days per teen, was 34 percent (or 1.5 days) better than controls' during the four-week period, a statistically significant difference.

TABLE 2

THE EFFECT OF LEAP ON ATTENDANCE IN SCHOOL AND ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS DURING A TYPICAL FOUR-WEEK PERIOD

	Program Group			Control Group			
Outcome	Percent Enrolled During the Period	x Average Days Attended *Per Enrollee* During the Period	= Average Days Attended Per Program Group Member During the Period	Percent Enrolled During the Period	x Average Days Attended *Per Enrollee* During the Period	= Average Days Attended Per Control Group Member During the Period	Difference in Average Days Attended During the Period
High school or adult education program	44.7	*13.3*	5.9	34.0	*13.0*	4.4	1.5 ***
High school	30.4	*15.2*	4.6	24.5	*13.9*	3.4	1.2 ***
Adult education program	14.3	*9.0*	1.3	9.5	*10.6*	1.0	0.3 *

NOTES: This table compares the attendance of LEAP and control group teens during a representative four-week period (at least six months after a teen became eligible for LEAP). It shows the percentage of LEAP and control group teens who were enrolled in high school or an adult education program, and the number of days they attended, during the period; multiplying these two figures gives the average days attended by all LEAP teens (enrolled and not enrolled). The last column shows the difference in average days attended by the two groups.

This table is based on the survey responses of 1,987 teens in the program and control groups.

Figures for average days attended per enrollee are in italics because they include only teens who were enrolled in school (rather than all program and control group members).

The asterisks in the last column indicate that attendance differences were statistically significant (significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent).

The next rows of the table show that the overall impact on days attended resulted primarily from LEAP's positive effect on high school attendance. While LEAP's impacts on high school and adult education program enrollment were comparable, the attendance story for enrolled teens was not. Program group teens who were enrolled in high school attended 15.2 days (out of 20 during the four weeks) compared to 13.9 for control group enrollees. However, among teens who were enrolled in adult education programs, LEAP teens attended 1.6 fewer days in the period than their control group counterparts. This suggests that some of the teens who were induced by LEAP to enroll in adult education chose programs that met relatively infrequently or did not attend as regularly as other teens. However, because there were many more program than control group teens enrolled in adult education programs (14.3 percent vs. 9.5 percent), the *total* number of days attended in these programs was larger for the program group (as shown in the shaded columns).

- **Data on the performance of in-school teens indicate that LEAP's impacts on high school enrollment have already translated into more graduations, although it is too early to tell how large this increase may eventually be. LEAP has also led to an increase in the proportion of teens who have passed the GED test.**

School records data collected from Ohio's four largest school districts suggest that, on average, program group enrollees attended school more regularly than control group enrollees and that this difference grew over time. Moreover, 26 percent of an early cohort of LEAP teens who attended school graduated within two years compared to 19 percent of control group enrollees. These are early results, but the differences are statistically significant. LEAP has also led to a small but statistically significant increase in the fraction of teens taking and passing the GED test. Additional data on school completion is necessary because many of the teens in the research sample are too young to have graduated or passed the GED during the study period. However, if these early differences continue in the future, LEAP will result in a substantial increase in school and GED completion.

- **Many teens have negative views of their high school experiences. These perceptions appear to have affected their decisions about enrollment and whether to attend high school or adult education programs.**

LEAP is not the only factor that affects teens' decisions about school enrollment. For example, focus group discussions suggest that aspirations for the future, family and peer pressure, and levels of maturity all affected teens' behavior. In addition, for many teens, the decisions about whether to return to school, and whether to attend high school or an adult education program, appear to have been affected by their negative experiences in high school before, during, and after their pregnancies. A large fraction of teens saw their high schools as unruly and dangerous, and said they were made to feel uncomfortable because they were parents. These perceptions were less likely to apply to adult education programs.

Policy Issues

These findings represent a positive interim report card for LEAP. They suggest that the LEAP model is feasible to operate, that its incentives have reached most eligible teens, and that the program has made noteworthy progress toward its immediate goal of encouraging teens to stay in or return to school or adult education programs. Given the importance of this group of young mothers, the recent interest in using financial incentives to alter the behavior of welfare recipients, and the fact that other states are considering programs of this type, these findings are timely. Because of this, it is important to reiterate that these LEAP results were measured for a policy package that includes bonuses as well as sanctions, and case management, child care, and transportation assistance in addition to financial incentives. It is not clear that seemingly similar approaches that omit or alter some of these components would achieve the same results. Moreover, although the results to date point to the potential promise of this particular model, several cautionary notes are in order.

Early Results. Most important, the story of LEAP's effects on school graduation and GED completion is not yet complete. Although the preliminary evidence is encouraging, a more complete assessment will have to await the evaluation's final report. In addition, the likelihood that any gains in school completion will translate into labor market impacts and/or reductions in welfare receipt is unknown at this point. It is also important to note that, as a welfare-operated program, LEAP has a limited ability to affect teens' experiences in school, and these experiences undoubtedly influence whether they will stay and whether there are long-run effects on employment. Thus, for example, if high schools are perceived to be inhospitable and dangerous – as they are to many LEAP-eligible teens in Ohio's largest cities – the enrollment results may yield fewer long-term payoffs.

Adult Education Programs. A substantial part of LEAP's effect on enrollment, particularly among older dropouts, is attributable to increased use of adult basic education (ABE)/GED preparation programs. This raises two important issues. First, although LEAP's incentive system implicitly considers a GED to be equivalent to a high school diploma, there is considerable controversy about the value of a GED in the labor market. Second, there is strong evidence that at least some LEAP teens have chosen ABE/GED programs that meet infrequently, and are not attending regularly. Several policy changes could potentially address this issue. For example, LEAP could require a minimum number of hours of ABE/GED attendance in order to earn a bonus (as some counties have already done), or design its incentives to encourage high school-age teens to choose high school over ABE/GED programs. (Of course, school districts' application of the adult education age requirements also affect the choices facing teens.) Steps such as these might increase high school enrollment and improve attendance in ABE/GED programs. However, they also might decrease the proportion of dropouts who are willing to enroll in the first place, thereby increasing the sanction rate and decreasing the program's impacts on these teens. This might be especially true in areas where there are few alternative high school diploma programs available.

Subgroup Impacts. In designing interventions for this population, policymakers will have to make difficult resource allocation decisions. Fundamentally, they will have to decide whether to target a broad group of teens and spend relatively little on each teen, or target a narrower group and spend more per teen. LEAP represents a broad-coverage approach and has a low cost per teen: the program's direct cost is $330 per eligible teen per year, based on preliminary data (however, this reflects low utilization of program-funded child care due primarily to Ohio day care regulations, and excludes indirect costs resulting largely from increased schooling costs).

Although the program's impact on school enrollment has been positive overall, it has not affected all groups of teens equally. Almost half the teens in the program group would have stayed in or returned to school with or without LEAP (as illustrated by the behavior of the control group). It is the other half whose behavior the program seeks to change. Within this latter group, there appear to be at least three categories of teens: (1) teens who are in school but are in danger of dropping out, (2) teens who are out of school but dropped out relatively recently, and (3) teens who have been out of school for an extended period.

LEAP has been relatively successful in promoting retention among teens in the first group and inducing some teens in the second group to return to high school. However, the program appears to have been less successful with the third group of teens, who tend to be older and are more likely to have more than one child. Teens in this group took longer to respond and, when they did, they rarely attended regular high schools. This relative lack of success was accompanied by a substantial amount of sanctioning. It may be that additional services or different requirements are necessary for this group. The LEAP model provides no such services directly, but services could easily be offered in conjunction with LEAP. A separate study within the LEAP evaluation currently under way in Cleveland is assessing the incremental effects of special services for in-school teens and dropouts offered in addition to LEAP's incentives. Results will be available later this year.

Ohio's Circumstances. Although Ohio counties have been able to implement LEAP, this has been a challenging process, which was assisted by several special circumstances that might not apply in other states. For example, by the end of the study period, Ohio had a highly sophisticated statewide welfare computer system. Advanced computer capability seems to be vital to operating a program of this type, especially in large urban areas with many eligible teens. Attempts to identify eligible clients, track their attendance, and adjust their grants without automated support are bound to be quite difficult, and the ability of a program to deliver what it promises may be vital to maintaining teens' respect and cooperation. Similarly, Ohio's GRADS program – which offers special classes and services to in-school teen parents – has assisted LEAP's implementation by providing an in-school infrastructure for establishing and maintaining contact with school staff and LEAP students. Just as negative school experiences may hinder LEAP's effectiveness, so positive school-based programs may bolster the strength of LEAP's incentives.

Program Design Issues. Several important implementation issues should be considered before starting an initiative of this type. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it would be difficult to successfully implement a financial incentive program for teens without providing case management. Especially in dealing with this vulnerable population, staff play a vital role by making sure teens understand the program, receive needed support services, and are treated fairly. Initially, financial incentives – specifically, the threat of sanctions – may induce teens to pay attention to staff. Ultimately, however, it may be the way staff present the incentives to teens and the relationships that develop between them that determine how teens will perceive the program. Other issues include:

- **Policies toward repeat pregnancy.** Rates of repeat pregnancy are quite high among LEAP and control group teens (a finding common to studies of other programs as well), and LEAP appears to have smaller effects on teens who have subsequent pregnancies. It is important to carefully consider exemption policies for this group. Originally, LEAP did not automatically exempt pregnant teens (although teens with problem pregnancies could receive medical exemptions). However, after the first year, a pregnancy exemption was added. Many LEAP staff have complained that this exemption sends an inappropriate message about additional pregnancies.

- **Policies for "on-board" eligibles.** In starting a program like LEAP, it may be necessary to consider special policies or different requirements for teens who are eligible for the program when operations begin. In some cases, these teens will have had children and dropped out of school several years earlier, and the imposition of a new mandate requires them to make a profound change in behavior. In an ongoing program, teens learn about the consequences of poor attendance earlier, often before they drop out; for "on-board" teens, the rules of the game change abruptly several years after the key decisions have been made. These teens are less likely to respond to the incentives, and more likely to incur repeated sanctions.

- **Post-program transition.** LEAP eligibility ends when teens reach age 20 or earn a diploma or GED. Many of the teens still have young children at this point and thus are exempt from mandatory participation in Ohio's JOBS program for adults. This may hinder a smooth transition into further education or training that may be vital to achieving the program's longer-term goals.

At this juncture, LEAP has achieved its primary short-term goals: It has exposed virtually all eligible teens to its financial incentive structure, and it has improved these teens' enrollment and attendance in schools and adult education programs. Its effect on some categories of teens has been small, and its general effectiveness might be improved with certain program changes. Nevertheless, its performance to this point has been impressive. It remains to be seen, however, whether LEAP's ability to induce teen parents to stay in and return to school will produce substantial changes in the proportion of teens who finish school and ultimately leave welfare.

PART I

INTRODUCTION TO LEAP AND ITS EVALUATION

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

This report presents an analysis of the effectiveness of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program in encouraging school attendance by pregnant and parenting teenagers on welfare. LEAP, a statewide program developed by the Ohio Department of Human Services (ODHS), provides these teens with financial incentives to go to school: The family's welfare grant is reduced for any month in which the teen does not meet a school attendance standard, and a bonus is paid if she does. Teens also receive assistance with child care and transportation, and each is assigned to a case manager, who is responsible for helping her overcome barriers to regular school attendance.

The analysis indicates that counties in Ohio have successfully applied the incentives to most eligible teens and that, after start-up problems, the program's overall operation has improved steadily over time. Moreover, LEAP has made substantial progress toward its short-term goal of inducing teens to enroll or remain enrolled in schools or adult education programs. The preliminary evidence also suggests that LEAP's success in promoting school enrollment may ultimately translate into increases in high school graduation and/or GED receipt.[1] However, longer follow-up is necessary to confirm this because many of the teens followed in this analysis were too young to have completed high school or to have passed the GED test during the study period.

The report is the second in an evaluation of LEAP being conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) with funding from ODHS, the Ford Foundation, the George Gund Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, BP America, the Treu-Mart Fund, the Procter & Gamble Fund, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It focuses on the first two and a half years of program operations – from the middle of 1989 through early 1992 – in seven Ohio counties. The analysis is based on a classic experimental research design and uses information drawn from a variety of sources, including a survey, school records, program records, and other data collected on several thousand teens in LEAP and in a randomly selected control group that did not participate in the program.[2]

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[1] In Ohio, individuals who pass the GED (General Educational Development) test receive an Ohio Certificate of High School Equivalence. For simplicity, this report uses the acronym GED to refer to both the test and the credential.

The remainder of this chapter includes a brief description of the LEAP program model, a discussion of LEAP's policy significance and previous research in this area, an explanation of the research design that underlies the evaluation of LEAP, and an overview of this report.

I. The LEAP Model

Participation in LEAP is mandatory for all pregnant women and custodial parents (almost all are women) under 20 years old[3] who are receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)[4] and do not have a high school diploma or GED. This includes both teens who head welfare cases and those who receive assistance on someone else's case (usually the teen's mother).

Under program rules (which are summarized in Appendix Table A.1), all eligible teens are required to enroll (or remain enrolled) in and regularly attend a school or education program leading to a high school diploma or GED. LEAP uses a three-tiered incentive structure to enforce its mandate. First, teens who provide evidence of school enrollment receive a bonus payment of $62. They then receive an additional $62 in their welfare check for each month in which they meet the program's attendance requirements. For teens in a regular high school, this means being absent no more than four times in the month, with two or fewer unexcused absences. Different attendance standards apply to part-time programs, such as Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs providing GED preparation assistance, but the same financial incentives apply.[5]

Second, teens who do not attend an initial LEAP assessment interview (which commences participation in LEAP) or fail to enroll in school have $62 deducted from their grant (i.e., the teens are "sanctioned") each month until they comply with program rules. Similarly, enrolled teens are sanctioned by $62 for each month in which they exceed the allowed number of unexcused absences.

Third, teens who exceed the allowed number of *total* absences, but do not exceed the allowed number of *unexcused* absences receive neither a bonus nor a sanction. Because teens have several opportunities to provide evidence of "good cause" for absences that schools define as unexcused,[6] there is a three-month lag between the month of attendance and the corresponding sanction or bonus; for example, poor attendance in October triggers a sanction in January.[7]

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[2] These data were augmented by follow-up interviews with county and state staff and discussions with small groups of LEAP teens through late 1992.

[3] During LEAP's first year of operations, the age limit was 19 rather than 20.

[4] In Ohio, this program is known as ADC. However, this report will use the federal abbreviation, AFDC.

[5] In Ohio, preparation for the GED test is usually provided in Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs or, since late 1992, Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) programs. These are popularly known as "GED programs." To avoid confusion, this report will use the term ABE/GED when referring to these programs and providers.

Teens may be temporarily exempted from the LEAP requirements if they are in the last seven months of a pregnancy, if they are caring for a child under three months old, if child care or transportation is unavailable, or for other reasons considered legitimate by the program.[8]

LEAP sanctions and bonuses can substantially change the income of participants. During most of the study period, a teen living on her own with one child was eligible for an AFDC grant of $274. A bonus increased her grant to $336. A sanction reduced it to $212. Thus, the total difference in AFDC payments between a teen who enrolled and attended regularly, and one who failed to enroll without a good reason, was $124 per month.[9] The program's requirements for receipt of bonuses and sanctions are summarized in Table 1.1.

Each LEAP teen is assigned to a case manager, who is responsible for helping her overcome barriers to school attendance as well as monitoring her compliance with program rules to determine whether a bonus or sanction is warranted. Teens are also eligible for assistance with child care and transportation as needed to attend school.

Under Ohio's county-administered welfare system, LEAP is operated by County Departments of Human Services (CDHS) in all 88 of the state's counties. Many aspects of the program's

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[6] Absences for which the teen provides a physician's statement are not counted under LEAP rules.

[7] When LEAP staff receive attendance information for a teen for a specific month (ideally by the fifth of the subsequent month), teens who fail to earn a bonus are notified by mail and have seven days to provide evidence of good cause for absences reported by the school. If good cause is not granted and a sanction is proposed, teens are again notified by mail and are given an additional 15 days to request a hearing on the proposed sanction. If no hearing is requested during this period, the sanction is processed. Together, these two waiting periods mean that sanctions cannot be processed in the first or second month following the poor attendance.

[8] Teens who are exempt during a pregnancy or because they are caring for an infant may "volunteer" for LEAP, in which case they may receive bonuses for attending school regularly. Otherwise, exempt teens receive neither bonuses nor sanctions.

[9] A teen living on her own with two children received $396 when she earned a bonus, compared to $272 when her grant was reduced owing to a sanction. The grant of a case head whose daughter is a parent, and whose case includes four individuals (the head, the teen and her child, and the other person), was $475 when a bonus was received and $351 when a sanction was imposed. These figures are based on grant levels during most of the study period. Grant levels were slightly lower in 1989 and were increased again in 1993.

TABLE 1.1

APPLICATION OF SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE STANDARDS IN LEAP

Standards	Monitoring Procedures	Bonus/Sanction Guidelines
Enrollment		
Teens are required to be enrolled in a school or education program leading to a high school diploma or its equivalent (a GED) during the entire time they are eligible for LEAP. A temporary exemption is granted if the teen is in the last seven months of a pregnancy or is the primary caregiver for a child under three months old, child care or transportation is unavailable, etc.	(1) After an initial LEAP assessment meeting, a teen has 10 days to provide proof of school enrollment. (2) Continued enrollment in the school or program for which proof was provided is monitored using records submitted by the school or program.	(1) When a teen verifies enrollment, she (or the head of the AFDC case) receives a $62 enrollment bonus. A teen who fails to verify enrollment is sanctioned with a $62 AFDC grant reduction each month until she complies. (2) A further $62 enrollment bonus is paid for each additional school year in which the teen is enrolled.
Attendance		
Once enrolled, teens are expected to attend regularly. For full-time high school (or junior high school) programs, this means two or fewer unexcused absences in a month and four or fewer total absences in that month. For part-time programs, attendance standards are based on the number of scheduled days.	Attendance is monitored using monthly records submitted by the school or program. Teens are given a chance to demonstrate that they had "good cause" for absences: the teen or her child was ill or injured, normal child care or transportation was not available and alternatives could not be found, etc.	A $62 bonus is paid for every month in which a teen meets the attendance requirement (see text). (The bonus is also paid when the month's attendance could not be determined but enrollment had been verified.) A $62 sanction is imposed for every month in which a teen fails to meet the standards. The teen receives her normal AFDC grant (no bonus or sanction) if she exceeds the allowed number of total absences but not the allowed number of unexcused absences.

implementation, including the staffing structure and specific responsibilities of case managers, are left to the discretion of the counties.

II. LEAP's Policy Context

LEAP is an important policy initiative for two main reasons. First, it focuses on a group – teenage parents on welfare who have not completed school – that is regarded by many as the key to reducing long-term welfare dependence. Second, it represents a distinctive policy approach – encouraging school attendance through the use of financial incentives and penalties – that may lead to improved economic prospects for this group. This section describes the problem LEAP seeks to address, discusses the central choices facing policymakers as they design interventions for teen parents, and explains how the three major ongoing evaluations of programs for teens will add to the knowledge base in this area.

A. The Problem

It is now well known that teenage mothers are at high risk of long-term welfare receipt.[10] About half of them receive AFDC benefits at some time during the five years after they first give birth,[11] and over a third of teen mothers who begin a welfare spell receive AFDC benefits in 10 or more years.[12] Total public assistance expenditures – including AFDC, Food Stamps, and Medicaid – for families started by a teenage birth were $22 billion in 1989, more than half of all outlays for these programs. Housing subsidies, foster care, and other social services add substantially to this total.[13] Moreover, children of teenage mothers are more likely than other children to have health problems, do poorly in school, suffer from behavior problems, and become teenage mothers themselves.[14]

Much of the effect of teenage parenthood on long-term welfare receipt appears to be related to truncated educational attainment. The vast majority of teen parents who enter the welfare rolls have not finished school at the time they start receiving welfare, and most do not finish school for many years, if at all. In 1986, only 56 percent of women age 21 to 29 who first gave birth at age 17 or younger were high school graduates. This includes women who were not on welfare in their teens as well as women who were. In contrast, 91 percent of those who became mothers between ages 20 and 24 were high school graduates.[15] Teens who fail to complete school frequently lack the educational credentials that are often required for jobs and further education, and also have poor basic skills that make it difficult for them to compete in the labor force.[16] Given this lack of credentials and skills, as well as the small probability that teen mothers will marry or that they will receive regular child support payments from the fathers of their children, long-term reliance on public assistance is quite likely. Thus, from the standpoint of welfare policy, developing more effective strategies for helping teen parents to complete school is enormously important.

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[10] Although unmarried women who give birth as teens often receive welfare for many years, it is not clear whether teenage childbearing *per se* causes this outcome. The women who give birth as teenagers are likely to have other characteristics that also help account for their economic circumstances. See Nord et al., 1992.

[11] Congressional Budget Office, 1990, p. xvi.

[12] Maxfield and Rucci, 1986. This does not necessarily indicate continuous welfare receipt during this period.

[13] House Committee on Ways and Means, 1992, p. 1100.

[14] Hofferth, 1987, pp. 123-44.

A strong case for targeting teen parents can also be developed from the perspective of education policy. Concern about the problems posed by school dropouts has grown to the point that, in 1989, the President and the state governors named increasing school completion as one of six national education goals for the year 2000. Teens who drop out of school during or just after a pregnancy make up a substantial fraction of all female dropouts.[17] However, while a multitude of dropout-prevention programs have been directed to this and other "at risk" student groups, there is very little solid evidence on the effectiveness of these programs.[18] Thus, policy tools designed to encourage them to complete school could potentially be important.

B. Policy Choices and Existing Knowledge

As interest in curbing long-term welfare receipt has grown, and research has increasingly linked teenage childbearing with this outcome, policymakers have begun to experiment with a variety of approaches to working with teen parents on welfare. This surge of interest is reflected in the Family Support Act, the major welfare reform legislation passed by Congress in 1988. The act established the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program, which offers new funding and incentives to states to provide education and other services to AFDC recipients. One of its provisions identifies recipients under age 24 who lack a high school diploma as a priority group for JOBS services, and another urges states to require custodial parents under age 20 who do not have a diploma to participate in an education activity. This requirement can be enforced through the use of welfare grant reductions (sanctions), even for parents with young children.[19]

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[15] Upchurch and McCarthy, 1989.

[16] See Berlin and Sum, 1988. It is also noteworthy that the earnings gap between females who finish school and those who do not has been steadily growing (Levy and Murnane, 1992, Appendix A, p. 1375).

[17] Moore, 1992.

[18] Mann, 1986, pp. 312-13.

In designing interventions for teen parents, policymakers face important resource allocation decisions. Put starkly, the key choice is between providing a broad group of teen parents with a relatively inexpensive policy treatment, or targeting a more costly treatment to a subset of the teen population. In addressing this broad issue, a host of subsidiary program design choices must be confronted. These include:

- **The role of services and financial incentives.** Policymakers must decide how much of their limited resources to invest in new services for teens versus financial or other incentives for teens to use existing services. Recently, there has been considerable interest in modifying welfare program rules to create financial incentives that encourage marriage, school completion, employment and training, and good parenting, and discourage further childbearing while on welfare and residence changes to obtain higher welfare benefits. For example, a New Jersey law denies additional AFDC benefits to mothers who give birth to children while they are on welfare; and Maryland reduces benefits if parents on welfare do not have their children immunized for specified diseases.

- **Mandating participation.** Adult welfare recipients have long been required to participate in employment-related activities, and rigorous evaluations have shown that these programs can lead to increased earnings and decreased welfare receipt. However, the mandatory-participation approach has only recently been applied to teen parents.[20] It is noteworthy that mandates of this kind cost money to enforce and imply broad service coverage (i.e., given a mandate, a large fraction of the population will use the service).

- **The role of education.** Some programs focus specifically on helping or encouraging teens to complete their high school education, while others include employment-related services. One attractive aspect of focusing on education, aside from its demonstrated ability to increase employment and earnings in the general population,[21] is that existing services are available to all teenagers through the public education system. However, some teens who resist attending school might be more willing to participate in employment-related activities.

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[19] Although it was developed before the Family Support Act passed, LEAP is now technically part of Ohio's JOBS program. Ohio had to obtain numerous federal waivers to operate LEAP, several of which are still needed under JOBS. For example, waivers were necessary in order to include teens under age 16 in LEAP, and to institute the program's unusual sanctioning rules. In addition, under the waiver agreement, the State of Ohio must bear the cost of bonus payments, to the extent that they are not offset by sanctions.

[20] Longstanding state truancy laws mandate school attendance for all teenagers up to a certain age (16 to 18, depending on the state), but enforcement has been uneven, especially if the teens are parents.

Of course, none of these choices are clear-cut. For example, policymakers can invest in both services and incentives for teens, or offer both education and training. Nevertheless, the choices do imply important trade-offs. MDRC has been examining similar trade-offs in relation to programs for adult welfare recipients, and is continuing to do so today in the national JOBS evaluation and separate evaluations of JOBS programs in Florida and California; other research, too, has addressed these choices.[22] However, the knowledge base available to those planning interventions for teens is much more limited.

Small-scale voluntary programs for pregnant and parenting teens have existed for many years. However, most have not been rigorously studied.[23] An exception is Project Redirection, a voluntary, multi-service program for young teens that was evaluated by MDRC using a quasi-experimental (non-random assignment) research design. Project Redirection, which operated in four sites in the early-to-mid 1980s, provided counseling and support services, and linked participants with a variety of education, pre-employment skills training, health, parenting, and family planning services in their communities. As in LEAP, a key goal of the program was to help teens complete high school. The evaluation of Project Redirection found that, two years after enrolling in the program, Redirection participants were not faring substantially better, in terms of school completion, employment, or other outcomes, than women in a comparison group who did not participate. However, after five years, the Redirection women were significantly more likely to be working and less likely be on welfare than members of the comparison group. In addition, their children were found to have fewer behavioral problems and a more extensive vocabulary.[24]

As noted earlier, until recently there have not been large-scale, mandatory programs for teen parents.[25] The first such effort, Wisconsin's Learnfare program, began operations in 1987. Learnfare requires all teens on welfare (not just teen parents) to regularly attend school and enforces this mandate with welfare grant reductions (there are no bonus payments). Although various studies of Learnfare have provided valuable information on the program's implementation experience,[26] results from an impact analysis completed in 1992, which was based on a quasi-experimental research design, have been questioned.[27]

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[21] Mincer, 1989.

[22] See Gueron and Pauly, 1991. See also Friedlander and Gueron, 1992; Riccio et al., 1989; and Riccio and Friedlander, 1992.

[23] It should be noted that several programs that do not focus on teen parents, but serve them as part of a broader population, *have* been evaluated rigorously. For example, see Mallar et al., 1982, which presents separate results of an evaluation of the Job Corps for young women with children, and Cave and Doolittle, 1991, which includes such results for JOBSTART.

[24] Polit et al., 1988.

C. The Distinctiveness of LEAP

LEAP is a distinctive approach to working with teen parents because of the choices Ohio has made with respect to the policy trade-offs, outlined above, regarding services and financial incentives, mandatory participation, and the role of education. Thus, the evidence generated by the LEAP evaluation will be useful to policymakers in addressing each of these choices.

First, LEAP relies heavily on financial incentives and existing services. The program does not offer new services, although it does provide case management and financial help with child care and transportation. Thus, LEAP may present policymakers with an attractive choice for working with teen parents on welfare – namely, a policy treatment that can be applied broadly to the entire population at relatively low cost. Indeed, preliminary data suggest that the net cost of LEAP per eligible teen per year is $330.[28]

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[25] State interest in "learnfare" strategies is rapidly increasing. In 1992, at least 19 state legislatures considered learnfare bills. Four states (Connecticut, Maryland, Oklahoma, and Virginia) approved some type of learnfare provisions. In addition, several other states (Missouri, California, and Oregon) have received federal waivers to undertake learnfare programs. See Levin-Epstein and Greenberg, 1992.

[26] See Pauly, Long, and Martinson, 1992; Corbett et al., 1989; Jackson, 1989; Pawasarat and Quinn, 1990; Greenberg and Sherman, 1989.

[27] See Pawasarat, Quinn, and Stetzer, 1992. An experimental evaluation of Learnfare is currently under way. See State of Wisconsin, 1992.

[28] This estimate is based on aggregate data on LEAP costs and eligible teens covering fiscal years 1990 through 1992, findings from LEAP casefile data covering the first 18 months after teens became eligible for the program (see Chapter 5), and self-reported information about the teens' use of child care based on a survey of eligible teens (see Chapter 6).

This cost has three components. First, for the first 18 months following eligibility determination, the net cost of the financial incentives was $43 per teen; the cost of bonus payments was $217 (3.5 bonus payments per teen), and the saving due to grant reductions was $174 (2.8 sanctions per teen). Second, the net cost of child care was $76 during the first 18 months; the child care utilization rate was 8 percent for LEAP teens versus 5 percent for control group teens. (The child care utilization rate per LEAP teen who was enrolled in a school or education program was higher.) LEAP teens were eligible for the program for 13.8 months, on average, and the average cost of child care per month was $180. Third, the average cost of case management,

(continued...)

In addition, the unusual nature of LEAP's incentives will also provide new evidence on the effectiveness of an incentive-based strategy. For example, the LEAP incentives encourage behavior – school enrollment and attendance – that is very specific and involves substantial change for many people (notably school dropouts). In contrast, programs that require immunizations, or even participation in a two- or three-week job search workshop, are much less demanding. Moreover, the financial incentives in LEAP are stronger than in most other programs because LEAP provides bonus payments in addition to penalties.[29] The cash assistance paid to a teen who attends school regularly can be more than 50 percent higher than what is paid to a teen who is not attending school (as indicated earlier, a teen who has one child and attends regularly receives $336, compared to $212 if she does not attend without a good reason). Finally, in LEAP, the incentives are applied to virtually everyone who is eligible for the program. In programs that rely on sanctions alone, many people receive exemptions that shield them from the penalties. For example, welfare recipients with very young children are exempted in virtually all programs. In LEAP, however, even many of the teens who obtain exemptions (for the reasons cited earlier) are able to receive bonus payments, and thus are still subject to the program's financial incentive structure to some extent.

Second, LEAP has enforced its mandate for all teen parents on a continuous, statewide basis.[30] This means that the mandate has been administered on a very large scale and in a variety of urban and rural settings around the state. More than 20,000 teens have been eligible for the program at some point since its inception in 1989. Among programs for teen parents on welfare, only the Wisconsin Learnfare program is comparable to LEAP in its scale and broad coverage of the eligible population.

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[28](...continued)
transportation payments, and other LEAP costs was $376 per eligible teen over the first 18 months; $14.95 million was spent statewide on these functions during fiscal years 1990-92, which was $27 per teen per eligible month (again, the average was 13.8 months of eligibility). Thus, the total cost, per teen, for the first 18 months after eligibility verification is $495, which amounted to $330 per teen per year.

These preliminary estimates exclude the cost of Income Maintenance staff carrying out bonus and sanction requests (this cost, per teen, was probably small). They also exclude indirect costs, notably education expenditures associated with increased school enrollment because of LEAP. Finally, the cost per teen, $495, is based on only 18 months of follow-up. About 50 percent of teens were still eligible for LEAP at the end of 18 months, so the cost of LEAP *per teen* will rise when additional follow-up data become available.

[29] In addition, because of a waiver of federal rules, Food Stamps are not adjusted downward when bonuses are paid.

[30] This constitutes broad coverage of the *teen parent* population. However, unlike Wisconsin's Learnfare program, LEAP does not include teens who are not parents.

Third, LEAP focuses entirely on the single goal of promoting school enrollment and attendance; teens may not fulfill the program's mandate by participating in training or employment services. Although many studies have shown that educational attainment is linked to better labor force outcomes among the general population,[31] there is much less evidence on this score for the welfare population. In addition, there is considerable controversy about the value of a GED in the labor market.[32] Finally, it is not clear whether any relationship between education and labor force success will apply when teens are induced to attend school under duress.

D. Other Current Interventions for Teen Parents on Welfare

In addition to the LEAP evaluation, two current demonstration projects with rigorous evaluations, both also developed prior to the Family Support Act, will provide evidence on alternative strategies for teen parents. These are:

- **New Chance.** New Chance was mounted as a 16-site demonstration program by MDRC in 1989. It focuses on 16- to 22-year-old mothers who are on welfare and have dropped out of school. The program provides a rich and intensive set of services including education; employability development and career exposure; work experience and skills training; workshops on family planning, AIDS, and substance abuse; classes on life skills, self-esteem, and parenting; counseling; health services; and, in some locations, on-site child care. The services are tied together by strong case management. Participation, which can last up to 18 months, is voluntary.[33]

- **The Teenage Parent Demonstration.** Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this demonstration, like the LEAP program, offers an opportunity to study the effectiveness of mandatory-participation programs for teenage parents. Begun in 1987, the programs are not statewide but instead operate in three sites (Camden and Newark, New Jersey, and South Chicago). In these locations, teens who are new AFDC recipients are required to participate in job search, training, or education programs. Failure to comply can result in a sanction that removes the teen's portion of the AFDC grant. In addition, teens receive case management, child care and transportation assistance, and workshops on parenting and other topics.[34]

Early impact findings from both New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration are expected within the next year.

Past research suggests that different approaches are likely to have varied success for different groups of teens. Thus, as new results become available, they may suggest that using different approaches for different subgroups of the teen parent population may prove to be effective. A special research and demonstration project in Cleveland within the LEAP evaluation has been developed by MDRC to directly address this issue. In cooperation with the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Services and the Cleveland Public Schools, this project is testing the effectiveness of enhanced services in addition to LEAP's financial incentives. As part of this project, about half of the LEAP teens in Cleveland have access to special high-school-based services, enriched teen-focused ABE/GED programs, community-based outreach and case management, and other services.[35] The other half receive normal school services and LEAP case management.[36]

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[31] Mincer, 1989.

[32] Cameron and Heckman, 1990.

[33] For more information, see Quint, Fink, and Rowser, 1991.

[34] For more information, see Hershey and Maynard, 1992.

III. The LEAP Evaluation

The LEAP evaluation is designed to provide reliable evidence about LEAP's operations and impacts. This section describes the components of the study, the research counties, and the analysis schedule.

A. Components of the Evaluation

The LEAP evaluation includes three principal components. The first, an analysis of program implementation and operations, examines the institutional structure of the county LEAP programs, operational issues confronted by LEAP staff, and the way LEAP is experienced by eligible teens. This analysis combines qualitative data, obtained through observation of program activities and interviews with staff and participants, with quantitative data on the use of sanctions, bonuses, and exemptions.

The second component of the study – the impact analysis – assesses whether LEAP has improved eligible teens' school enrollment and attendance and, in the longer term, whether the program produces higher rates of school completion and other longer-term impacts. A subgroup analysis examines the program's effects on specific groups within the overall population. The impact study is based on a comparison of two randomly selected groups of eligible teens – a program group, which was subject to the LEAP incentives, and a control group, which was not.

The final component, the benefit-cost analysis, will use the impact and process data, as well as information on program expenditures, to assess whether the benefits attributable to LEAP exceed the program's costs, from the perspectives of eligible teens, government budgets, and society as a whole.

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[35] It is also important to note that some teens in the present study received these services; thus they may contribute to LEAP's overall impacts in Cuyahoga County.

[36] For details, see MDRC, 1991.

B. The Research Counties

The LEAP evaluation includes 12 Ohio counties. They were selected randomly from among the 26 counties that, according to ODHS estimates, had at least 40 potentially eligible teens at the beginning of program operations in 1989. These 26 counties included approximately 90 percent of the estimated statewide LEAP caseload. Each had a probability of selection for the study that was proportional to its estimated LEAP caseload. This weighted random selection method allows MDRC to generalize results based on these 12 counties to the state as a whole, while at the same time avoiding the inefficiency and high cost of involving more than 12 counties in the study in order to obtain the total sample necessary for a statistically reliable analysis.[37]

Although the final report will include data from all 12 research counties, this report focuses on a subset of seven research counties, which were designated "Tier 1 counties" at the beginning of the study. The Tier 1 counties were targeted for more intensive research and data collection, and a larger fraction of teens in these counties was assigned to the control group (20 percent, compared to 5 percent in the Tier 2 counties).

Figure 1.1 highlights these research counties, and Table 1.2 describes some of their key characteristics. Clearly, the counties in the study are a varied group. They include seven of Ohio's eight largest cities as well as several smaller cities and several predominantly rural areas. The counties are geographically, ethnically, and culturally diverse, and they experience a range of economic conditions. Overall, the 12 counties include about two-thirds of the state's total AFDC caseload. The seven counties that are the focus of this report are also diverse, and include almost 50 percent of Ohio's welfare caseload.

C. Analysis and Report Schedule

The ultimate goal of LEAP is to help eligible teens achieve financial self-sufficiency and leave welfare. However, the program's incentives and services directly address only two issues: school enrollment and school attendance. Thus, LEAP's ability to accomplish its long-term objectives depends on a complex series of intermediate steps. First, counties must be able to implement the

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[37] Since 62 rural counties with very small LEAP caseloads were not eligible for selection into the study, the results of the evaluation will not necessarily describe the impact of LEAP in these counties, which include about 10 percent of the statewide caseload.

FIGURE 1.1

COUNTIES IN THE LEAP EVALUATION

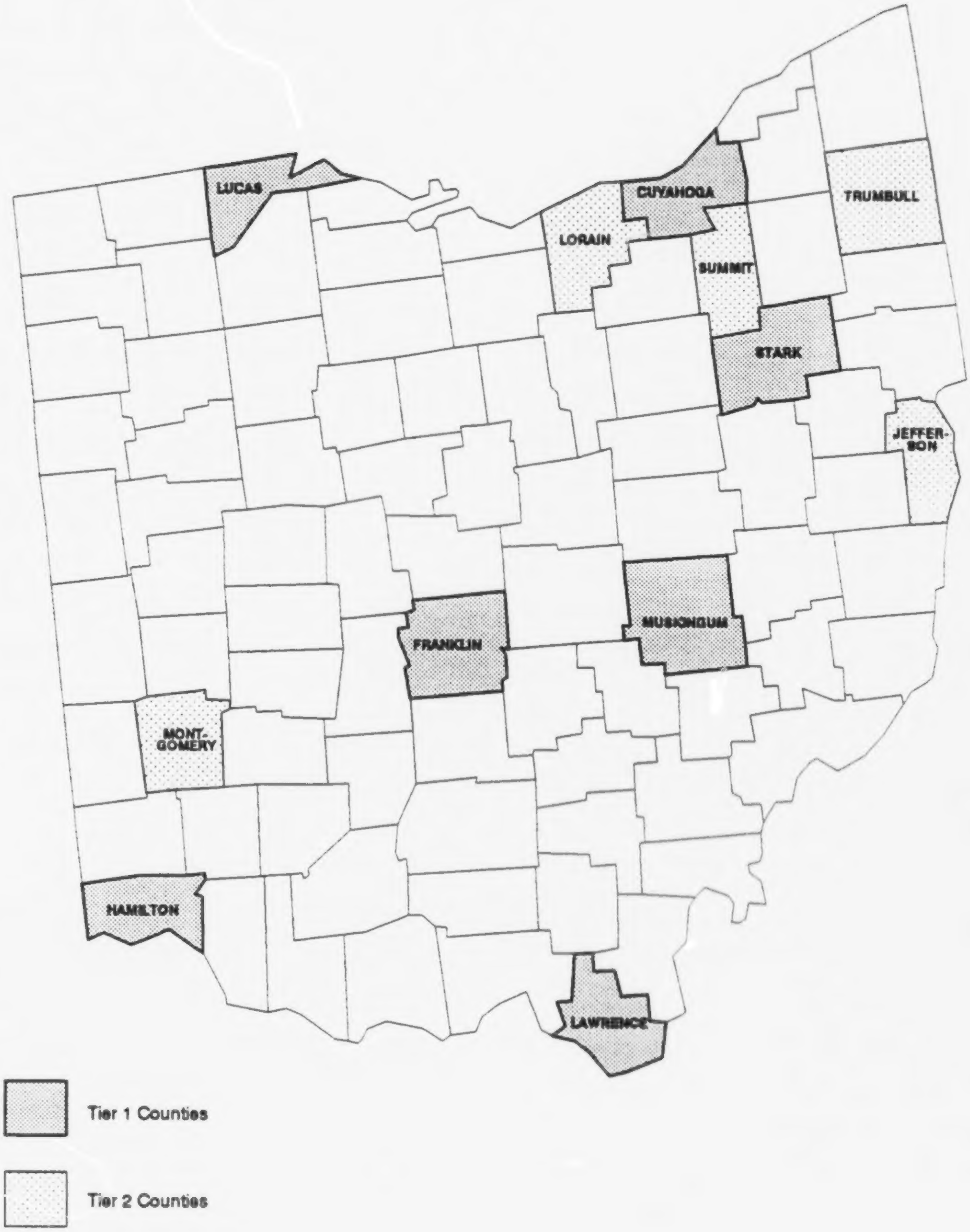

TABLE 1.2

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF OHIO COUNTIES IN THE LEAP EVALUATION

County	Largest City	County Population (1990)	County Population Rank (a) (1990)	AFDC Recipients (1991)	Percent of Total State AFDC Recipients (1991)	Births to Teenagers/ Total Births (1989)	Poverty Rate (1991)	Unemploy-ment Rate (1991)	Percent Rural (1980)	Percent Under 18 Who Are Nonwhite (1990)
Tier 1 Counties										
Cuyahoga	Cleveland	1,412,140	1	129,747	18.6	13.3	18.6	5.5	0.4	35.1
Franklin	Columbus	961,437	2	67,304	9.7	13.3	14.0	4.2	4.2	24.1
Hamilton	Cincinnati	866,228	3	58,568	8.4	15.3	16.5	4.5	3.8	28.5
Lawrence	Ironton	61,834	41	7,276	1.0	19.1	27.5	7.8	47.8	3.2
Lucas	Toledo	462,361	6	43,648	6.3	16.3	17.3	8.8	6.0	23.8
Muskingum	Zanesville	82,068	29	5,359	0.8	15.8	18.1	9.1	65.6	6.1
Stark	Canton	367,585	7	21,192	3.0	12.7	13.7	6.9	26.1	10.7
Tier 2 Counties										
Jefferson	Steubenville	80,298	32	7,175	1.0	17.5	22.6	7.3	43.8	8.2
Lorain	Lorain	271,126	9	17,432	2.5	14.7	13.3	9.5	15.1	14.6
Montgomery	Dayton	573,809	4	39,702	5.7	14.3	15.0	5.7	6.9	24.7
Summit	Akron	514,990	5	34,329	4.9	12.1	13.4	6.0	9.0,	18.0
Trumbull	Warren	227,813	11	15,020	2.2	12.8	15.0	7.9	28.9	10.0
Totals for the 12 counties		5,881,689	--	446,752	64.1	--	--	--	--	--
Weighted average for the 12 counties (b)		--	--	--	--	14.0	16.1	5.9	8.7	24.4
Totals for the Tier 1 counties		4,213,653	--	333,094	47.8	--	--	--	--	--
Weighted average for the Tier 1 counties (c)		--	--	--	--	14.1	16.7	5.6	6.8	26.8
Ohio totals		10,847,115	--	697,083	100	13.7	15.0	6.4	26.7	15.2

SOURCES: Children's Defense Fund–Ohio and Junior Leagues of Ohio, 1991 (see References); Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland, 1991 (see References); Ohio Bureau of Employment Services; Ohio Department of Human Services.

NOTES: (a) There are 88 counties in Ohio.
(b) Weighted by county population as a percentage of the 12–county total population.
(c) Weighted by county population as a percentage of the 7–county total population.

program model successfully. Second, LEAP incentives and services must achieve their immediate goal of increasing school enrollment and attendance. Finally, these short-term impacts must have longer-term consequences. Thus, once they are in school, LEAP teens must make progress and ultimately obtain high school diplomas or GED certificates, and this increased educational attainment must translate into higher earnings and, ultimately, reduced welfare receipt.

The three reports in the LEAP evaluation are designed to follow this chain of outcomes. The first report examined the early implementation experiences of the research counties, focusing on their ability to operationalize the program model.[38]

The current report includes additional and updated information on program implementation, but mostly focuses on the experiences of eligible teens in LEAP during their first 6 to 18 months in the program. During this early period, it is most productive to focus on the first links in the chain: (1) teens' experiences with LEAP sanctions and bonuses, and (2) the impact of these incentives on school enrollment and attendance. The report also includes early evidence on whether enrollment gains appear to translate into increases in school completion.

The final report will pick up where this one leaves off. Following LEAP teens for up to four years, it will update the school completion results, and consider other longer-term outcomes.

IV. An Overview of This Report

This report has three parts – one that introduces the analysis and two that present the findings. It also has four appendices, which provide further information and examine technical issues related to the data used in the analysis.

A. Introduction

Part I of this report – Chapters 1-3 – introduces the analysis. Chapter 2 discusses the analysis plan and the study's data sources. Readers are urged not to skip this discussion because it is important to understanding the subsequent presentation of findings. The analysis has adopted a distinctive strategy for assessing the operation of LEAP's incentive structure and the effects of the program on school outcomes, in view of the inherent complexity of these tasks and the limitations of the data that could be collected. An appreciation of this strategy will greatly improve readers' understanding of the results.

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[38] See Bloom et al., 1991.

Chapter 3 discusses the sample for the analysis. The discussion looks not only at demographics, but also at the lives, experiences, attitudes, and expectations of a few teens who participated in focus group discussions.

B. Program Operations

Part II of the report turns attention to LEAP's operations. Chapter 4 provides an overview of program implementation between 1989 and 1992, and summarizes the lessons that can be drawn from this experience. The discussion analyzes LEAP's early implementation period, but also incorporates information acquired through interviews with county and state LEAP staff during the last six months of 1992.

Chapter 5 assesses the operation of LEAP – i.e., how LEAP's incentive structure is applied to the eligible population of teen parents. The analysis first examines the experience of teens in LEAP, from the point of eligibility verification to one and a half years later, for a sample of teens for whom LEAP and AFDC casefile data were collected. This yields longitudinal measures of the frequency, sequences, and duration of program bonuses and sanctions, and includes a discussion of the typical patterns of teens' experiences in LEAP.

In addition, the analysis examines the extent to which the program took actions – either bonuses or sanctions – at different points in time during the first three years of operations. This suggests the extent of improvement in the program's application of LEAP's financial incentive system.

Chapter 6 discusses teens' perceptions of LEAP and its incentive structure. It draws on data from both the survey and the focus group discussions.

C. Program Effects

Part III of the report assesses LEAP's impacts on several school outcomes. Chapter 7 considers the program's impacts on school and adult education program enrollment, relying primarily on survey data. Chapter 8 examines effects on school attendance and provides early findings on school progress and completion, using both survey and school records data.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA SOURCES, AND ANALYSIS PLAN

This chapter describes the research design for the analysis presented in this report. Sections I and II discuss the random assignment process that was implemented in the research counties and two analytical issues related to that process. Sections III and IV describe the data sources that were used in the analysis, the strategy that guided the collection of these data, and analytical issues pertaining to those efforts. The final section, Section V, discusses the analysis plan, focusing on how and where the data are presented in the remaining chapters of the report.

I. Random Assignment

As noted in Chapter 1, the LEAP impact analysis is based on a random assignment research design. To implement this design, all teens who were determined to be eligible for LEAP in the 12 study counties from the time the program began operating, in July 1989, through September 1991 were assigned, at random, to one of two groups: a program group, which remained eligible (and mandatory) for all aspects of LEAP, or a control group, which was not eligible for the LEAP incentives and case management.[1] Members of the control group, of course, were free to attend school; however, their school attendance was not monitored by LEAP staff and their welfare grants were not adjusted based on their attendance.[2] Also, control group teens were ineligible for payments (other than for child care) and case management from Ohio's JOBS program.[3] A total of 7,017 teens were randomly assigned in the seven counties studied for this report – 80 percent to the program group and 20 percent to the control group.[4]

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[1] Members of the control group were eligible to receive child care assistance to the same extent as members of the program group because it was determined that all AFDC recipients who attend school or training are entitled to such assistance, regardless of whether they are JOBS participants (LEAP is a component of JOBS in Ohio).

[2] Members of the control group remain ineligible for LEAP until January 1, 1994. At that point, they may be admitted to the program if they are still eligible.

[3] It is possible that a few older teens received JOBS training expense payments or case management despite being ineligible.

[4] This ratio reflects an effort to balance two objectives: (1) to minimize the number of teens who would not receive LEAP services, and (2) to obtain a control group of sufficient size to allow for a statistically reliable analysis.

Because teens were assigned to the program and control groups at random, the members of the two groups are similar in all measurable and unmeasurable characteristics except for the fact that one group received the LEAP treatment and the other did not. Thus, the control group provides the best evidence on what would have happened to the teens in the program group if LEAP did not exist. As members of the two groups are tracked over time, any differences in school attendance, school completion, or other outcomes that are measured for the two groups are attributable to LEAP.

II. Analysis Issues Related to Random Assignment

Using a random assignment design to evaluate a real-world program is always a complex undertaking. This section describes two analytical challenges arising from the application of random assignment in the LEAP evaluation, and discusses how this report addresses these issues.

A. Program Start-Up

As noted above, random assignment of teens to the program and control groups started at the same time LEAP operations began in the research counties. This was necessary because a large group of teens already met the LEAP eligibility criteria when the program began. It was essential to include these "on-board" teens in order to ensure that the research sample was both complete enough to allow the process analysis presented in Chapter 5 to be conducted,[5] and large enough to allow performance of the full impact analysis presented in Chapters 7 and 8.[6]

However, the fact that random assignment was initiated so early in LEAP's operational history raises analytical issues, two of which are particularly noteworthy:

- **Shortened treatment for some teens.** Most of the on-board teens entered LEAP under circumstances that would not exist in an ongoing program. For example, some already had 2- or 3-year-old children. Under normal circumstances, teens become eligible for LEAP when they are pregnant with their first child.[7] These unusual conditions at the point of intake may have affected these teens' responses to the LEAP incentives. In addition, because eligibility for LEAP ends when teens reach a specific age (age 19 during the period in question), these "on-board" teens had an artificially short exposure to the program. Both of these factors might be expected to reduce LEAP's effect on these teens, thereby decreasing the overall impact estimates.

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[5] If these teens had been excluded, the research sample would not include all the cases that LEAP worked with during the period covered by the analysis. Thus, it would not have been possible to assess LEAP's overall operations during its first three years of operation. For example, it would not have been possible to estimate the aggregate bonus and sanction rates presented in Figure 2 of the Executive Summary and Figures 5.3 and 5.4 of Chapter 5.

[6] The sample across all counties and all teens would have been large enough for estimating overall program effects, even if these teens had been excluded. However, with their exclusion, it would not have been possible to estimate county-specific program effects outside Cuyahoga, or to analyze how the effects of LEAP differed among key subgroups of teens (see Section VB of this chapter). The resulting county- and group-specific impact estimates are imperfect, because they are based partly on teens who obtained a shortened LEAP treatment, but they are still crucial to understanding the extent to which LEAP is an effective policy.

- **Start-up treatment for most teens.** About half the teens in the research sample entered LEAP during its first year of operations. These teens experienced a LEAP program that was in its infancy and, as discussed in Chapter 4, not operating at peak efficiency.[8] In many studies, random assignment begins after program staff have had an opportunity to address start-up issues, and the program is thought to be operating at "steady state." Since the evidence in Chapter 4 suggests that LEAP operations have improved since the first year, this analysis represents an early, conservative test of the program's effectiveness.

It should also be noted that the process- and impact-analysis results that include "on-board" teens and teens who experienced LEAP during its early months provide valuable information on policy issues that arise in a program's start-up phase. First, they allow the evaluation to examine how LEAP operated during this early period. Second, the analysis can discuss how the program affected teens whose treatment period was truncated – a group that may be less likely to cooperate with the program rules and be affected by its treatment.[9] These results are vital to assessing LEAP's overall effectiveness, and also provide information that is relevant to other states considering this type of program.

B. Point of Random Assignment

In any random assignment evaluation, the point in the program intake process at which individuals are assigned to the program and control groups is very important. Such a study can only measure program effects that occur after random assignment because any aspect of the treatment that affects eligible clients before that point cannot be restricted to members of the program group. Thus, in order to capture the full effect of a program, it is necessary to place random assignment at a point before the intervention begins to influence people's behavior. While critically important, these theoretical concerns must be balanced against ethical and logistical considerations and the need to minimize disruption of the program under study.[10]

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[7] A teen with an older child can become eligible for LEAP under normal circumstances, but only if she is not receiving AFDC when her child is born.

[8] Teens who were randomly assigned early and were close to aging out of LEAP at that point experienced the program almost exclusively during the start-up period. Younger teens who entered the sample early may have remained in LEAP for several years, and thus may have experienced a more smoothly operating version of the program as well. However, it is important to note that the follow-up period for each individual in the research sample is 12 to 18 months (depending on the data source). Thus, even for younger early assignees, the analysis is strongly influenced by the start-up period.

[9] These "on-board" teens are more likely than other teens to have dropped out of school prior to becoming eligible for LEAP; indeed, many had been out of school for one or more years. Thus, these teens must make a substantial change in their behavior to comply with LEAP rules.

Teenagers are usually identified as *potentially* eligible for LEAP by staff in the Income Maintenance (IM) divisions of County Departments of Human Services (CDHS). (IM workers determine and monitor recipients' eligibility for AFDC.) These cases are then referred to LEAP staff, who hold an in-person or telephone interview with each teen to confirm her eligibility for the program.[11] Random assignment was inserted into the process at the point of *actual* eligibility determination; as soon as this occurred, LEAP staff completed a one-page sheet of demographic information about the teen (the Teen Parent Information Sheet, or TPIS) and placed a telephone call to MDRC to find out her research status (i.e., program group or control group).

Although random assignment always occurred at the point that eligibility for LEAP was confirmed, the intake/eligibility determination process was handled somewhat differently in each county. The two basic approaches are depicted in Figure 2.1. They are:

- **Telephone process.** Under this method, staff contacted teens by phone to confirm their eligibility, explain the research, and complete the TPIS. They then conducted random assignment, and only teens assigned to the program group were scheduled for an in-person LEAP orientation and assessment. Members of the control group received a letter informing them of this status, and were not scheduled for an office visit.

- **In-person process.** Under this method, all potentially eligible teens were scheduled for a face-to-face LEAP orientation and assessment. When teens showed up for this appointment, eligibility was confirmed, the TPIS completed, and random assignment conducted. Teens assigned to the program group remained in the office for orientation and assessment, while those assigned to the control group could leave.

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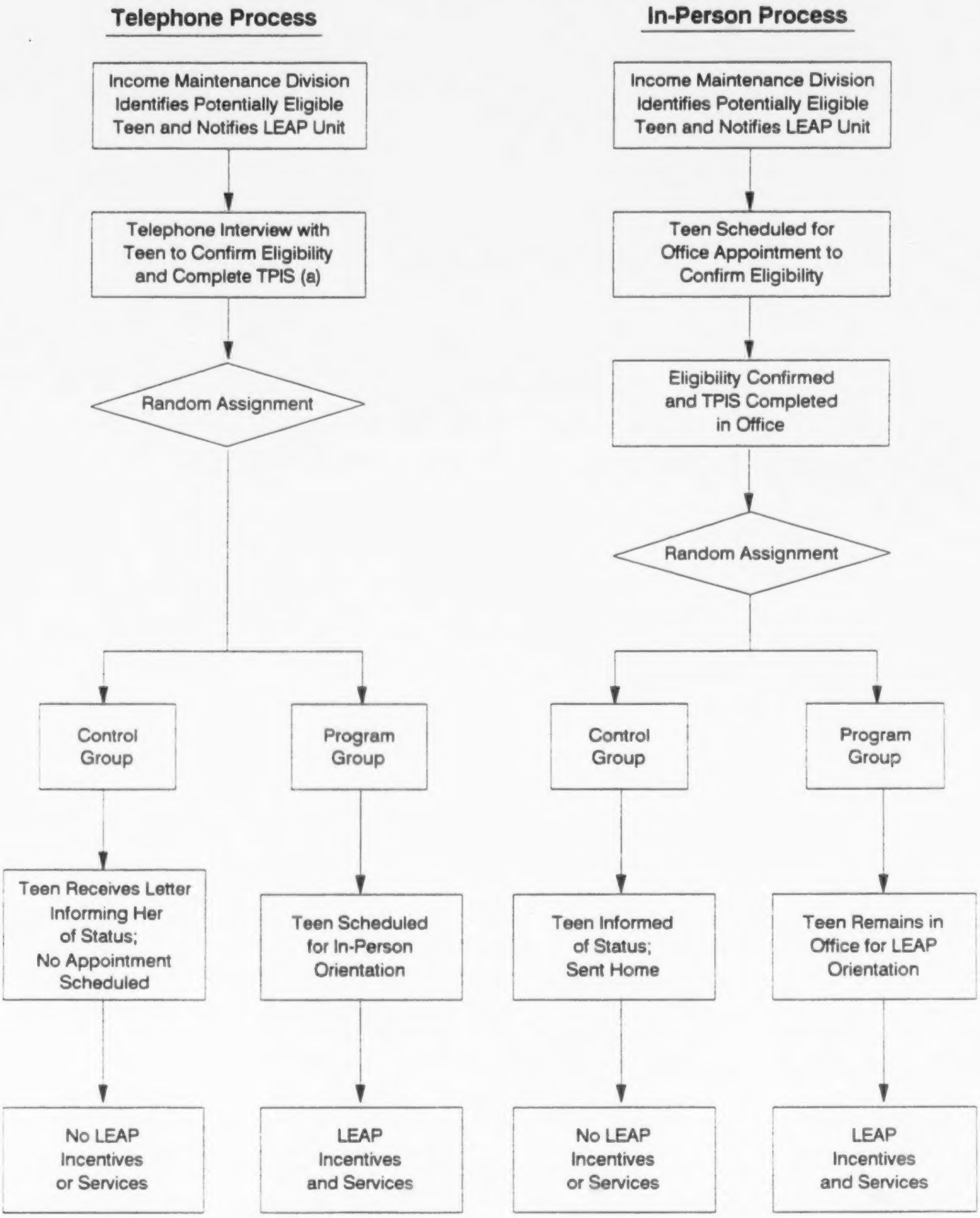
[10] Thus, for example, it may be preferable to conduct random assignment when the client is present so that baseline demographic information can be collected and the evaluation can be fully explained at the same time. However, programs may influence clients via administrative mechanisms long before they appear for in-person interviews.

[11] This step is necessary in part because Income Maintenance workers often do not have reliable information about the school completion status of AFDC recipients.

FIGURE 2.1

INTAKE PROCESSES USED IN LEAP EVALUATION COUNTIES


Telephone Process
Income Maintenance Division Identifies Potentially Eligible Teen and Notifies LEAP Unit
Telephone Interview with Teen to Confirm Eligibility and Complete TPIS (a)
Random Assignment
Control Group
Program Group
Teen Receives Letter Informing Her of Status; No Appointment Scheduled
Teen Scheduled for In-Person Orientation
No LEAP Incentives or Services
LEAP Incentives and Services
In-Person Process
Income Maintenance Division Identifies Potentially Eligible Teen and Notifies LEAP Unit
Teen Scheduled for Office Appointment to Confirm Eligibility
Eligibility Confirmed and TPIS Completed in Office
Random Assignment
Control Group
Program Group
Teen Informed of Status; Sent Home
Teen Remains in Office for LEAP Orientation
No LEAP Incentives or Services
LEAP Incentives and Services

NOTE: (a) Teens who could not be reached by phone were often scheduled for an office appointment.

Counties were free to use either of these approaches to eligibility determination, and in some cases they mixed the two. For example, one county initially relied heavily on the in-person process, but later began to make more use of the telephone process.

In addition to this variation in intake procedures, counties also differed in their typical responses to teens who failed to cooperate with the eligibility determination process. (Under LEAP rules, teens who miss two LEAP appointments without good cause are subject to sanction.) One of the counties (Franklin) relied almost exclusively on the telephone process, and staff report that teens were never sanctioned until their eligibility for LEAP could be confirmed. If a teen could not be reached by phone, staff visited her at home if necessary to confirm eligibility and complete the TPIS. Other counties attempted several phone contacts and then scheduled the teen for an office appointment; teens who missed two such appointments without a valid excuse could be sanctioned, even though their eligibility for LEAP had not been confirmed. Finally, a few counties relied primarily on the in-person process, and frequently sanctioned teens for failing to attend their eligibility determination interviews.

These differences in intake procedures and responses to noncompliance mean that the LEAP treatment began at a slightly different point in the intake process in each county. Thus, while random assignment always occurred as soon as eligibility was confirmed, teens were influenced by LEAP to varying degrees before that point. This has important implications for the analysis presented in this report:

- **Sanctioning outside the impact design**. Some teens in the research sample were sanctioned before random assignment and, conversely, some teens who were sanctioned never became part of the research sample. Given the importance of sanctioning in the LEAP model, this suggests that the process study needs to examine activity that occurred outside the framework of the impact design in order to tell the full story. Chapter 5 includes such a discussion.

- **County variation**. Because county procedures differed, the extent of pre-random assignment sanctioning varied across the three counties that are included in the analysis of bonus and sanction rates. For example, in Franklin County, where teens were not sanctioned before eligibility was confirmed, all sanctioning occurred after random assignment, and all teens who were sanctioned are members of the research sample. By contrast, in Hamilton and Cuyahoga counties, which relied more heavily on the in-person method and sometimes sanctioned teens before eligibility was confirmed, teens were more likely to be sanctioned before random assignment. In addition, many sanctioned teens in these counties never entered the research sample. These differences should be kept in mind when comparing the county-specific results presented in Chapters 5 and 7.

- **Effect on the impact estimates.** The differences in intake procedures and sanctioning policies could affect the impact estimates that are presented in Chapters 7 and 8, and that will be included in the final report on LEAP. For example, in an "in-person" county, all teens in the program group have, by definition, attended a LEAP orientation/assessment. In a "telephone" county, this is not the case. If this step is an important part of the program treatment, this disparity might affect the fraction of program group teens who respond to LEAP. Similarly, members of the control group may have been influenced by LEAP to different degrees in each county. In counties that relied heavily on the telephone process, control group teens were unlikely to be influenced by the program, since they were never even scheduled for an office visit. In the other counties, members of the control group visited the CDHS before being assigned to that group, and may have been influenced to some extent. Although they may be important, it is difficult to determine the role played by these factors – as opposed to county programmatic strategies, school policies, and other issues – in generating the county-specific results.[12]

III. Data Sources and Data Collection Strategy

This section discusses the data sources that are used in this analysis, the groups of teens for whom each type of data were collected, and the time period covered by each data source.

A. Data Sources

As described in Chapter 1, this report addresses a wide variety of topics, including the implementation of LEAP; the use of sanctions and bonuses; LEAP's impact on three major school-related outcomes: enrollment, attendance, and completion; impacts for different subsets of the LEAP population; and the teens' perceptions of LEAP and school. A range of data sources was required to address these diverse topics. The major sources are described briefly below.

- **Baseline data.** As noted earlier, the TPIS was used to collect demographic and identifying information about teens when they first entered the research sample. The form was completed by LEAP staff during an in-person or telephone interview. TPIS data are used to describe the teens in the research sample, to identify the members of important subgroups, to increase the precision of impact estimates, and to analyze selection bias when subsamples are used (see below).

- **Survey data.** A brief survey was administered to a large subset of teens either by phone or in person at least four months after random assignment. The survey examined teens' self-reported school enrollment patterns, recent attendance, and attitudes toward LEAP and school. The survey was necessary to obtain school information about teens in the program and control groups in the same manner, since LEAP staff do not track the school attendance of control group members.

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[12] In addition to Franklin County, Cuyahoga and Stark counties also used the phone process extensively. The other four counties included in this report relied mostly on the in-person process.

- **High school and adult education records.** Records obtained from selected school districts were used both to confirm the self-reported school information from the survey and to collect additional data about high school and adult education outcomes that could not be obtained via the survey. In addition, the State of Ohio provided information on GED testing for research sample members.

- **LEAP and AFDC casefile data.** MDRC staff reviewed LEAP and AFDC casefiles for a random subset of program group teens to obtain information about sanctions and bonuses, exemptions, eligibility, and other operational issues. LEAP casefiles were used to assess sanctions and bonuses requested by LEAP staff, and AFDC files were used to obtain information on sanctions and bonuses actually delivered. This manual effort was required, in part, because little reliable information could be obtained on this subject from the statewide public assistance computer system that was in place for most of the study period.[13]

- **Focus groups.** To flesh out the attitudinal issues covered in general terms on the survey, a consultant was hired to lead discussions with small groups of LEAP teens in three counties. These discussions lasted roughly 90 minutes and covered a standard set of topics, including school attitudes and experiences, LEAP experiences, attitudes toward being a parent, and repeat pregnancy.

- **Staff interviews/field research.** MDRC staff held telephone interviews with LEAP supervisors and staff in all of the Tier 1 counties and at the Ohio Department of Human Services (ODHS) in late 1992 to obtain up-to-date information about LEAP program operations and organizational issues. These data were combined with information collected during earlier site visits to the counties to create a database of qualitative information.

B. Subsamples and Follow-Up Periods

Of the data sources described above, baseline data and GED testing information are available for the entire Tier 1 research sample. All other types of data were obtained for subsets of the full Tier 1 sample (resource constraints made it impossible to collect all types of data for all 7,017 sample members). Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2 describe the subsample for which each type of data was obtained and describe how these subsamples were selected. Each of the major data sources is discussed in turn below.

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[13] The AFDC payment computer system did not reliably identify months when LEAP bonuses or sanctions were issued. A much more sophisticated system is now in place (see Chapter 4).

TABLE 2.1

DATA SOURCES AND SAMPLES FOR THE LEAP EVALUATION

Data Sources	Counties in Which Data Were Collected	Sample for Whom Data Were Collected	Number of Teens in Samples	Period Covered by Data
Baseline data	All Tier 1 counties	All program and control group members	7,017 Total 5,611 Program group 1,406 Control group	Data reported as of random assignment date
Survey data	All Tier 1 counties	All control group members; (a) 25% of program group (chosen randomly). Interviews completed with 74% of subsample members.	Subsample: 2,808 Total 1,412 Program group 1,396 Control group Respondents: 2,089 Total 1,051 Program group 1,038 Control group	From random assignment to survey administration. Survey administered 4 to 21 months after random assignment.
High school and adult education records: high school outcomes and ABE/GED enrollment and attendance	All Tier 1 counties, but data collected only in public school districts in largest cities in each county.	Districts with automated records: All program and control group members who attended high school or ABE/GED in the targeted district(s). Districts without automated records: Survey respondents who reported attending high school or ABE/GED in the targeted district(s).	In the 4 districts with automated high school records, data were analyzed for 823 high school attenders (675 P; 148 C). (b) In the 7 districts without automated high school records, data were analyzed for 38 high school attenders. Data were analyzed for 28 ABE/GED attenders in 1 district.	1989-90 and 1990-91 academic years

(continued)

TABLE 2.1 (continued)

Data Sources	Counties in Which Data Were Collected	Sample for Whom Data Were Collected	Number of Teens in Samples		Period Covered by Data
High school and adult education records: GED completion	All Tier 1 counties	All program and control group members	7,017	Total	July 1989 through March 1992
			5,611	Program group	
			1,406	Control group	
LEAP and AFDC casefile data	Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties	Random subsample of program group members in the survey subsample	LEAP: 388	Program group (c)	6 to 18 months after random assignment
			AFDC: 282	Program group (d)	
Focus group data	Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties	Members of the LEAP casefile subsample who were active in LEAP in April 1992, plus additional teens in Cuyahoga County who had not complied with LEAP rules.	Invited: 250	Program group	Discussed experiences in LEAP and school through October 1992
			Attended: 55	Program group	

NOTES: (a) Ten members of the control group were not included in the survey sample.

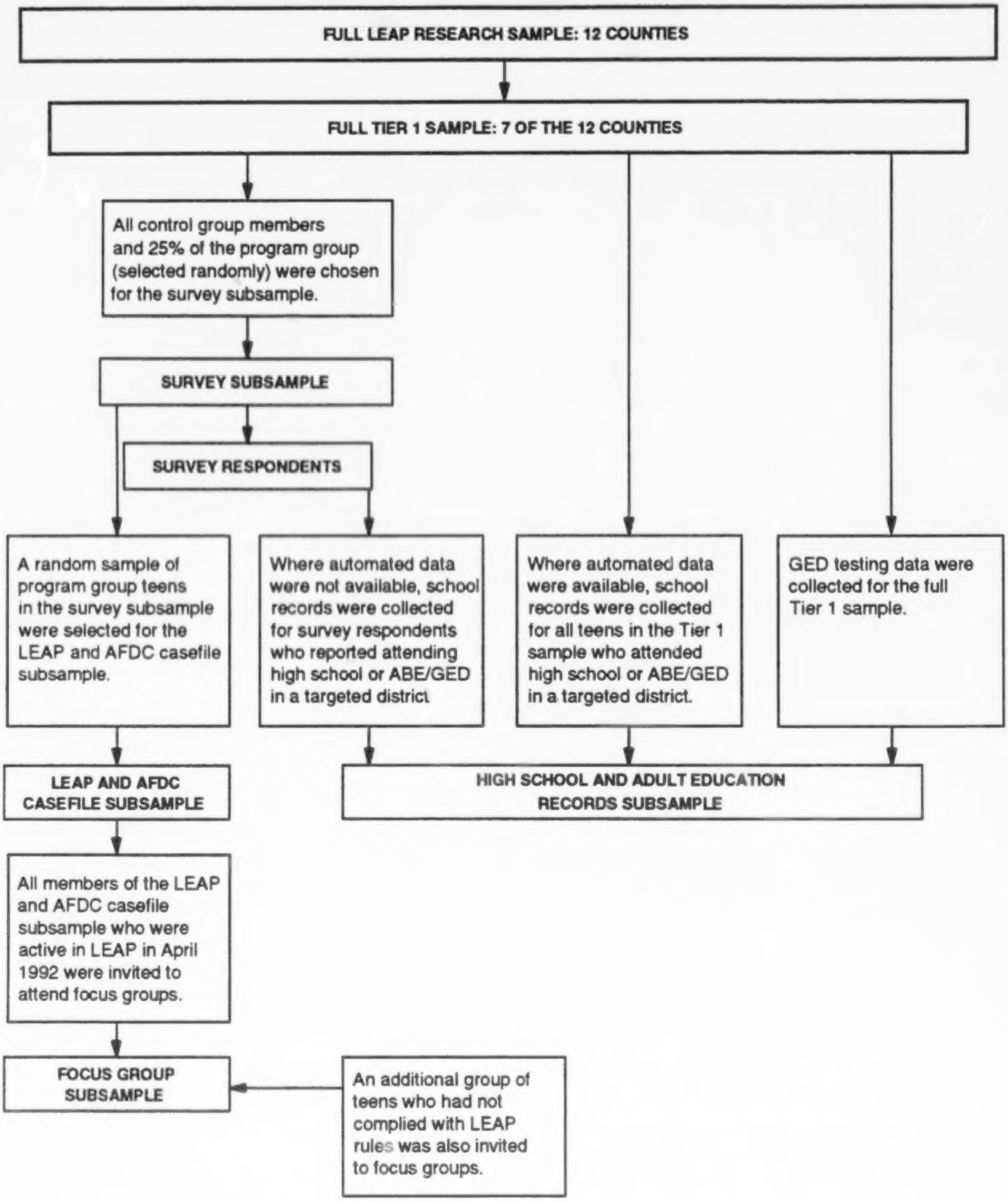
(b) School records were collected for all teens in the research sample who attended school in these districts. However, only a subset of these records – for the 823 teens randomly assigned by December 1989 – were used in this report's analysis.

(c) Data were also collected for a few teens who were sanctioned by LEAP but did not become part of the research sample.

(d) AFDC casefiles, as well as LEAP casefiles, were examined for these 282 teens.

FIGURE 2.2

SUBSAMPLES USED IN THE LEAP EVALUATION


FULL LEAP RESEARCH SAMPLE: 12 COUNTIES
FULL TIER 1 SAMPLE: 7 OF THE 12 COUNTIES
All control group members and 25% of the program group (selected randomly) were chosen for the survey subsample.
SURVEY SUBSAMPLE
SURVEY RESPONDENTS
A random sample of program group teens in the survey subsample were selected for the LEAP and AFDC casefile subsample.
Where automated data were not available, school records were collected for survey respondents who reported attending high school or ABE/GED in a targeted district
Where automated data were available, school records were collected for all teens in the Tier 1 sample who attended high school or ABE/GED in a targeted district.
GED testing data were collected for the full Tier 1 sample.
LEAP AND AFDC CASEFILE SUBSAMPLE
HIGH SCHOOL AND ADULT EDUCATION RECORDS SUBSAMPLE
All members of the LEAP and AFDC casefile subsample who were active in LEAP in April 1992 were invited to attend focus groups.
FOCUS GROUP SUBSAMPLE
An additional group of teens who had not complied with LEAP rules was also invited to focus groups.

1. **Survey Data.** As Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2 illustrate, survey data were collected for a large subsample of teens, and several of the other important subsamples were drawn from this group. The survey subsample includes all control group members and one-fourth of the program group (selected randomly) in all seven Tier 1 counties – 2,808 teens in all.[14] The survey subcontractor was able to locate and administer the survey to 2,089 of these teens (74 percent of the subsample).[15]

The survey asked teens about their school enrollment behavior and school experiences during the period from random assignment until the survey administration date. However, the survey was not administered to teens a fixed number of months after random assignment. Instead, it was fielded in two stages, one in late 1990-early 1991 covering teens randomly assigned before September 1, 1990, and one in late 1991-early 1992 covering teens randomly assigned on or after that date.[16]

2. **High School and Adult Education Records.** Data were obtained for each of the three key educational outcomes: enrollment, attendance, and completion. In addition, some data on educational progress were collected. These outcomes are defined differently for students in high schools[17] and those in ABE/GED programs. For example, attendance in high schools is measured in days, while it is generally measured in hours in ABE/GED programs. Completion is defined as graduating from high school or passing the GED test. These definitions are discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8.

Information on each outcome was collected for as many sample members as possible given the available resources. Two factors affected the scope of this effort:

- **The location where data were maintained.** Information on all outcomes for high school students, and on enrollment and attendance for ABE/GED students, was maintained at the school or school district level. Since it was not feasible to collect data in every school district in the Tier 1 counties (there are 107 school districts in the seven counties), this effort focused on the public school district(s) in the largest city in each county (LEAP teens were heavily concentrated in schools and programs operated by these districts). In all, records were obtained from 11 school districts.[18] By contrast, since data on GED testing for the entire State of Ohio are maintained in a single computerized database by the Ohio Department of Education, it was possible to obtain information on GED completion for the entire research sample in all seven counties.

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[14] In the two small rural counties, Lawrence and Muskingum, a small number of extra program group members were added to the survey sample. This explains why there are slightly more program than control group members in the survey subsample.

[15] The completion rate was virtually identical for the program and control groups.

[16] For ease of administration, teens were asked about enrollment during a period that covered all possible random assignment dates for their cohort. Thus, for example, all teens in the first stage were asked about school enrollment since September 1989, and all teens in the second stage were asked about enrollment since September 1990. (Teens randomly assigned in July and August 1989 were not asked about the period before September 1989.)

[17] Some research sample members were in junior high school. For brevity's sake, the inclusive term "high school" is used in this report to refer to both junior high school and high school.

- **The form in which information was stored.** When records were stored in computerized databases, information on large numbers of teens could be obtained at relatively low cost. In these instances, an automated "match" was conducted based on social security number (or some other identifier) to obtain information for all sample members who had any data stored in the records. By contrast, when information was stored in paper form, such as transcripts, it was impossible to conduct such a "match" by hand. Thus, in these districts, data could be obtained only for teens who reported on the survey that they had attended a specific school or program.

These two factors combined to produce the three components of the high school and adult education records subsample depicted in Figure 2.2. Information on all high school outcomes was available from automated databases in the four largest school districts in the Tier 1 counties (Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Toledo). Thus, in the counties where these cities are located, information was obtained for all members of the research sample who attended high school in the largest district.[19]

Information on high school outcomes for students in the seven districts without automated databases, as well as for ABE/GED enrollment and attendance in all districts, was collected from paper records. Thus, in these instances, information was collected only for survey respondents who reported attending a school or program in a targeted district.[20]

All school district records were collected for the 1989-90 and 1990-91 academic years. Statewide GED testing data were collected through March 1992. (As noted above, since these data on GED completion were obtained from a statewide computerized database, this information was available for the entire Tier 1 sample.)

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[18] In Hamilton and Lawrence counties, data were obtained from more than one school district. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.

[19] Tables 2.1 and 8.2, which refer to these data, include only the 823 teens who were randomly assigned through December 1989 and attended school in these four districts.

[20] Because of data quality issues discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8, information on ABE/GED attendance is reported for only one school district.

3. **LEAP and AFDC Casefile Data**. LEAP and AFDC casefile data were collected for a random subsample of program group teens who were in the survey subsample (including both respondents and nonrespondents) in Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton, the three largest counties; see Appendix E for further discussion of this subsample. A total of 388 teens were included in this group.[21] Data were collected for a period beginning when teens were identified as potentially eligible for LEAP (often several months before random assignment) and ending in April 1992.

In addition to collecting information about research sample members from the date of random assignment forward, it was also necessary to collect some limited data about sanctions that occurred before random assignment since, as discussed earlier, they represent an important part of the overall picture in some counties. In addition, it was necessary to obtain some information about sanctions delivered to teens who never became members of the research sample. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

4. **Focus Group Data**. Fifty-five teens participated in the focus group discussions. MDRC invited two different groups of teens:

- **Random group.** One invited group was drawn from the random subsample of teens for whom LEAP casefiles were reviewed. Thus, representativeness was sought (although the effort was restricted to the same three counties where casefile data were collected). In addition, because the success of the discussions depended on the ability of teens to recall their experiences in LEAP, only teens who were still eligible for the program in April 1992 were invited to the sessions, which were held in October 1992. Altogether, approximately 200 teens were invited to attend. Unfortunately, the response of teens to these invitations was relatively poor despite an offer of monetary incentives, babysitting, free food, and bus tokens. Ultimately, 25 teens attended the discussions. Given the low response rate, it is clear that the focus group participants cannot be considered representative of the entire LEAP population. However, the representativeness of the 25 teens is probably similar to what it would have been had 25 teens been recruited from among 40 to 50 nonrandomly chosen cases, the more typical way participants for focus groups are chosen.

- **Noncompliant group.** Not surprisingly, the most striking way in which the first 25 participants are unrepresentative is that relatively few of them had histories of serious noncompliance with LEAP rules. Consequently, an additional group of

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[21] Collecting casefile data for all of the program group teens would have necessitated manual reviews of more than 5,000 casefiles in seven counties, which was beyond the scope of this analysis. Two variables contributed to the cost of this effort – the number of counties and the number of cases – and each had to be limited. Also, as noted in Chapter 5, AFDC casefiles were not reviewed for all teens in this subsample.

> about 50 teens in Cuyahoga County – most of whom had been sanctioned at least once or had received an exemption that lasted at least two months – was invited to focus group sessions in December 1992. Thirty teens – mostly school dropouts – attended.

Thus, slightly more than half of the 55 participants in a total of nine focus group sessions were from the latter noncompliant group. However, it is important to note that all of the teens who attended focus groups had complied with LEAP to some extent (in some cases after special outreach services). Not surprisingly, teens who completely refused to cooperate with the program also did not attend focus groups.

IV. Analysis Issues Related to Data Sources and Data Collection

Integrating diverse data sources into a coherent analysis is a challenging task that inevitably raises analytical issues. Three such issues are discussed here.

A. Data Attributes

Both of the key data sources used to assess school impacts have inherent advantages and limitations. Survey data have the important advantages that (1) they may be obtained in a consistent form across all teens in all school districts, even when a teenager moves several times; and (2) issues such as teen attitudes and student effort (amount of homework done, etc.) can be explored, along with matters such as school attendance and graduation. However, survey data may be less reliable than data from some other sources because teens may have difficulty recalling when they were enrolled in school or may purposely give inaccurate responses.[22] Intentional overreporting of school enrollment is especially troublesome if it is more prevalent among program group members (who may suspect that the size of their AFDC grant hinges on their response) than control group members. In Appendix C, consequently, survey responses are compared with school records for the same teens to assess the accuracy of the self-reports.

School records also have advantages and disadvantages. The records are official (not subject to self-report bias), are available on all teens in a school district (they are not subject to survey nonresponse bias), and can be assembled longitudinally to cover many semesters or years (longitudinal survey data are subject to survey respondent recall error). However, as noted earlier, it is virtually impossible to collect records from all school districts. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to interpret these records because each school district maintains its records in a unique format and defines key terms differently. For example, one district may record both days present and days absent, while another records only days absent. In order to generate days present from the latter information, it is necessary to have very accurate information on the period during which each teen was enrolled in school.

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[22] Because of the potential difficulties inherent in self-reports of school behavior, the survey was used only to obtain information on general patterns of enrollment and recent attendance. More detailed attendance information and data on completion were obtained through the school records.

Using both data sources has permitted the analysis to obtain the best (the advantages) from both data source worlds. However, the use of multiple data sources is also problematic. In particular, the analysis must cope with different definitions of the term "enrollment":

- **School records' definition.** School districts' technical definitions of enrollment may, in some cases, have little practical meaning. For example, some districts automatically reenroll for the following year all students who are considered enrolled when school ends in June. Thus, a teen may be considered enrolled at the beginning of a school year even if she or he never attends school during the year.

- **Teens' definition.** A school district's technical definition of enrollment may have little to do with how teens describe their own enrollment status. For example, when teens are asked on a survey whether they are "enrolled" in school, some might answer "yes" only if they attend regularly, while others may answer affirmatively if they went to the school sometime earlier in the year and filled out some papers, even if they never returned.

These potentially contrasting definitions can produce conflicting enrollment information on the same teen, and made it more difficult to use school data to assess the reliability of survey responses.

B. Representativeness

In deciding what data to collect for this analysis, the familiar choice between data breadth and depth was confronted at several junctures. The trade-offs that were made mean that more extensive data were collected in some places than in others – and, hence, that the analysis does not equally represent the LEAP experiences of all teens in Ohio for two reasons:

- **Representativeness of the research counties.** The analysis as a whole focuses on a group of seven counties that were not selected randomly (the group was chosen from among 12 counties that *were* randomly chosen).

- **Representativeness of the subsamples.** As described above, many sections of the analysis are based on subsamples of the full Tier 1 research sample. For example, the analysis of bonuses and sanctions includes only the three largest counties; data on most school outcomes were collected only in major cities; and not all survey subsample members were interviewed. Thus, care should be taken in generalizing the results beyond the areas they covered.

Nevertheless, these limitations detract little from the analysis, for several reasons. First, the Tier 1 counties include 72 percent of the total research sample in all 12 LEAP evaluation counties, and roughly half of the *statewide* AFDC caseload. The three largest counties alone account for nearly 60 percent of the total research sample and more than a third of the statewide caseload. Finally, the LEAP caseload in the large counties is heavily concentrated in the major city in each county. Thus, while the analysis overrepresents the experiences of teens in large cities, this is logical given the evaluation's limited resources, since the results in these cities would heavily influence any estimate of statewide impacts.

Second, as indicated in Chapter 1, the Tier 1 counties are a diverse group. While large urban counties are disproportionately represented, the group also includes two heavily rural counties (Muskingum and Lawrence) and a third county with a substantial rural population (Stark). The counties also reflect a variety of demographic characteristics and economic conditions. Thus, those parts of the analysis that focus on the full set of Tier 1 counties (e.g., the school enrollment impact analysis) include teens in a wide range of circumstances.

Third, in the final report on LEAP, it may be possible to revisit some of the key issues covered here in an analysis that includes the full group of 12 randomly selected research counties.

Fourth, since the survey is the key data source used in the impact analysis, statistical tests have been conducted to determine the extent to which the baseline characteristics of teens who responded to the survey differ from those of teens in the full survey subsample, and the implications of these differences for the impact estimates. This analysis, which is presented in Appendix B, concludes that survey nonresponse has not seriously affected the impact estimates.

C. Periods of Coverage

Where possible, it is desirable to ensure that information collected from each data source covers a uniform period following random assignment for each sample member. For example, in some evaluations, data on all relevant outcomes cover the first two post-random assignment years. However, this was difficult to achieve with both the survey and school district records.

The survey administration strategy was determined by the elongated sample intake period. Although necessary to obtain a large enough sample for the analysis, the length of this period made it impossible to administer the survey at a common point relative to random assignment for all teens; this would have necessitated having a subcontractor work on the survey for 27 months, which would have been prohibitively expensive. Thus, it was necessary to field the survey in two relatively brief stages. While lowering the cost considerably, this fielding strategy meant that some teens were surveyed four months after random assignment while others were contacted at the 21-month point. Overall, about 95 percent of the respondents were surveyed at least six months after random assignment, and more than half were surveyed at least 12 months after random assignment.

High school records presented a different type of problem because, for the most part, these data had to be aggregated by semester or school year in order to obtain uniform outcome measures across districts.[23] Thus, it was not possible to report information for a specified number of post-random assignment months for all teens. In addition, since teens were randomly assigned throughout the sample intake period, it was difficult to isolate their post-random assignment period using these records. For example, for a teen randomly assigned on October 15, part of the first semester is pre-random assignment, and part is post-random assignment.[24] Finally, the aggregation of data by semester or school year complicated the task of "lining up" the survey with the school records.

V. Analysis Plan

This section describes how the data sources described above are used in the analysis presented in the rest of this report. The first part of the section explains the connection between the data sources and the key research questions, while the next part describes how subsets of the key subsamples are used to address two cross-cutting issues: (1) the impact of LEAP on key groups within the population, and (2) the experiences of teens with relatively more post-random assignment follow-up data available.

A. Linking Data Sources and Research Questions

Table 2.2 illustrates how the data sources described above are used to answer the key research

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[23] Progress and completion data obtained from school districts were typically aggregated by academic year. Attendance data were aggregated by month or semester.

[24] Including pre-random assignment information in the impact calculations does not bias the results, but it might decrease the size of the program-control difference relative to the averages for both groups.

TABLE 2.2

RESEARCH TOPICS AND DATA SOURCES FOR THE LEAP EVALUATION

Chapter	Title	Topics	Data Sources
Chapter 3	The LEAP Population	Aggregate demographics Attitudes and aspirations	Baseline data Focus group data
Chapter 4	LEAP Implementation	Implementation practices and challenges	Field research data
Chapter 5	Application of the LEAP Incentive Structure	Usage and patterns of sanctions and bonuses	LEAP and AFDC casefile data
Chapter 6	The Teens' Perceptions of LEAP	Teens' experiences in and attitudes toward LEAP	Survey and focus group data
Chapter 7	Impacts on School Enrollment and Attendance	Impacts on enrollment and attendance (self-reported)	Survey data
		Factors affecting school enrollment decisions	Survey and focus group data
Chapter 8	School and Adult Education Experiences	School attendance and completion for enrolled teens	Survey and school district records
		GED completion	State GED records
		School behavior (self-reported)	Survey data

questions, and also notes where in the report each topic is addressed. In general, rather than organizing the chapters around the data sources, the report seeks to integrate data from a variety of sources into discussions of particular topics:

- **Part I.** Chapter 3, the final chapter in this part of the report, discusses the characteristics of the LEAP population, based primarily on the baseline demographic data on the research sample and supplemented with information from the focus group discussions.

- **Part II.** The second part of the report examines the operation of LEAP in the research counties from several perspectives. It begins with Chapter 4, which presents qualitative information on LEAP's implementation obtained through site visits, observation of program activities, and interviews with county and state staff. Chapter 5 examines the operation of the LEAP financial incentive system in Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties using information collected from LEAP and AFDC casefiles. Finally, Chapter 6 examines LEAP's policies and practices from the perspective of eligible teens using survey data supplemented by focus group information.

- **Part III.** The last part of the report focuses on LEAP's impact on teens' school experiences. Chapter 7 addresses impacts on school enrollment, an outcome that is directly affected by LEAP's incentives. This analysis relies on self-reported information from the survey covering all seven counties. School and adult education records and survey data, supplemented with information from the focus groups, are then used in Chapter 8 to take an early look at how teens perform once they are in school. School records are used to assess the attendance and completion patterns of teens who attended school in selected districts, while survey and focus group data are used to obtain a fuller picture of teens' school behavior. This information is intended to provide some early evidence about the nature of LEAP's longer-term impacts on school completion. This issue will be revisited in the final report.

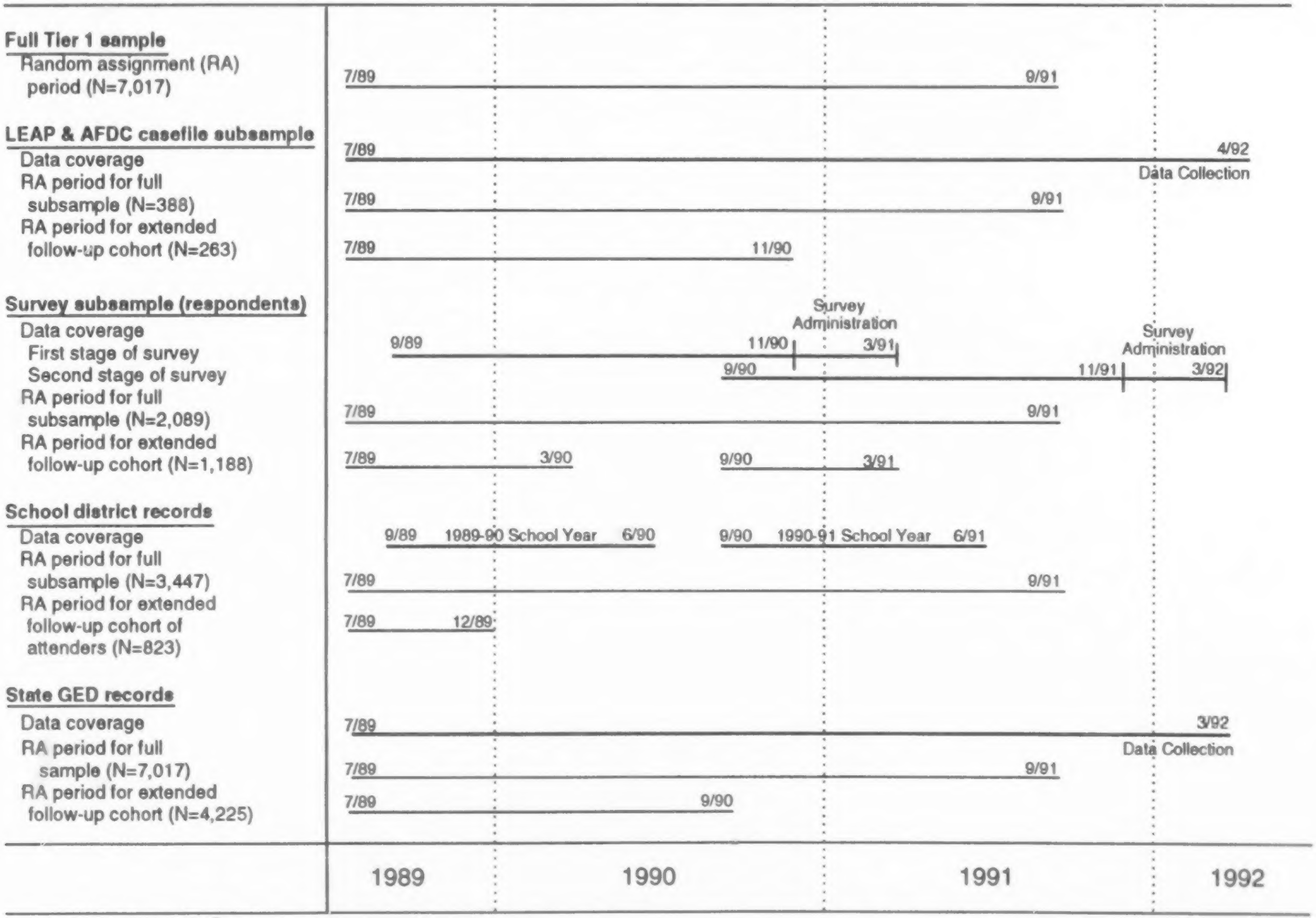
B. Cohort and Subgroup Analysis

Two broad issues are woven into many parts of the analysis described above. First, an important goal of this study is to determine whether LEAP's incentives and services are more or less effective for certain subgroups of eligible teens. Second, the analysis examines how LEAP operations and impacts vary depending on how long a teen is followed from the point of random assignment. In order to address these topics, it is necessary to separately examine *subgroups* of teens within the key subsamples who have certain baseline characteristics, and *cohorts* of teens who entered the research sample in different time periods. This section describes these two types of analysis.

1. Cohort Analysis. Figure 2.3 indicates the time period covered by each data source and

FIGURE 2.3

COVERAGE PERIODS FOR KEY DATA SOURCES AND RANDOM ASSIGNMENT PERIODS FOR COHORTS IN THE LEAP EVALUATION



illustrates the cohorts within each subsample that are used in the analysis. It was necessary to identify these cohorts because, in general, the available data cover only the first six months after random assignment for the latest sample members (random assignment ended in late September 1991, and most data were collected by April 1992). Thus, the analyses often include two parts: (1) a brief section focusing on the full subsample during a relatively brief post-random assignment follow-up period that is common to all of its members (typically, six months), and (2) a lengthier section focusing on a specific cohort within the subsample that is used to examine a longer follow-up period.[25] Because, as described above, the data sources do not cover the same time periods, it was not possible to focus on teens from the same cohort throughout the analysis.

This type of analysis first appears in Chapter 5, where LEAP and AFDC casefile data are used to examine sanction and bonus patterns. As indicated by the top line in the section of Figure 2.3 pertaining to these data, information was collected for a period ending in April 1992. The next two lines indicate that the analysis in Chapter 5 focuses first on the full LEAP casefile subsample (including teens randomly assigned throughout the sample intake period), for whom at least six months of post-random assignment data are available, and then on an early cohort (randomly assigned by the end of November 1990), for whom at least 18 months of follow-up data are available. The sample sizes in Figure 2.3 indicate that 68 percent of the full sample is included in the early cohort.

The analysis of school enrollment impacts in Chapter 7, which is based on survey data, follows a similar pattern. The first two lines in this section of Figure 2.3 illustrate the periods covered by the two stages of the survey. The next lines show the random assignment dates of the cohorts that are analyzed in Chapter 7. In this case, most of the analysis focuses on the extended follow-up cohort for whom at least 12 months elapsed between random assignment and survey administration. Because the survey was administered in two stages, this cohort actually includes two groups of teens: one randomly assigned between July 1989 and March 1990, and the other randomly assigned between September 1990 and March 1991. The sample sizes in Figure 2.3 show that over half of the survey respondents are included in the extended follow-up cohort. In addition, certain parts of the analysis refer to the full survey subsample, for whom at least six months of post-random assignment data are available.[26] The full subsample is used primarily to examine certain points that require a larger research sample.

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[25] These cohorts are referred to as "early" or "extended follow-up" cohorts in the text.

[26] About 100 survey respondents were excluded from this analysis because they were surveyed less than six months after random assignment. Most of these teens were randomly assigned in July and August 1990. (In the second survey stage, later assignees were interviewed last to ensure that at least six months of follow-up were available in all cases.)

The examination of school district records in Chapter 8 focuses almost exclusively on teens randomly assigned by the end of December 1989 (the end of the first semester of the 1989-90 school year) and covers the semester of random assignment and three subsequent semesters (a total of two school years). Data were also collected for later assignees, but these are generally not reported because the follow-up period is too short.

Finally, the analysis of GED completion, based on statewide GED testing information, focuses primarily on an early cohort of teens randomly assigned through September 1990, and examines the first 18 months after random assignment for this group. The analysis also briefly discusses results for the full Tier 1 research sample during the first six months after random assignment.

It is important to note that, aside from having more follow-up data available, teens who were randomly assigned earlier in the sample intake period differ from later assignees in several other respects. Thus, results based on early cohorts reflect these differences in addition to any effects caused by longer exposure to LEAP. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 3.

2. Subgroup Analysis. In order to understand how LEAP affects specific kinds of teens, the analysis focuses on a set of subgroups defined by the demographic information collected via the TPIS. Since the survey subsample is the only one large enough to allow for extensive subgroup analysis, this type of inquiry appears primarily in Chapter 7. The key subgroups are based on the following criteria:

- **School enrollment status.** The subgroups were identified based on the distinction between teens who were already enrolled in a high school or ABE/GED program when they became eligible for LEAP and those who were not enrolled at that point. LEAP's incentives might be expected to work differently for these two groups, since the goal is different; in one case, keeping a teen from dropping out, and in the other, persuading a dropout to return to school. Within the latter group, there is a potentially important distinction between teens who had recently stopped attending school and those who had been out of school for an extended period. It is plausible that teens who have been out of school longer have fallen further behind and may be more difficult to influence.

- **Age.** Three age categories have been created: 12 to 15 years old, 16 to 17 years old, and 18 to 19 years old. This categorization is critical for several reasons. First, teens usually move from their mother's AFDC case to their own case at about age 18. This is important because the financial incentives could be expected to work differently when they affect teens' grants directly. Second, upon reaching age 18, teens pass the age of compulsory school attendance in Ohio and become eligible to enroll in ABE/GED classes (this is discussed further in Chapter 4).

Third, teens may be considered mandatory JOBS participants when they reach age 16; federal waivers were required to serve younger teens in LEAP.

- **Case head status.** As noted above, LEAP might work differently for teens who head their own AFDC cases than it does for teens who receive assistance on their mother's case. However, it is important to note that almost all teens eventually move to their own case at age 18 if they are still receiving AFDC at that point.

- **Number of children.** Teens with more than one child may be a more disadvantaged group, and are also more likely to have entered LEAP under atypical conditions because they were already eligible when the program began. It is important to note that a large fraction of teens gave birth to additional children after they entered the research sample.

Several of these subgroups overlap. For example, most older teens head their own cases, and most younger teens receive assistance on someone else's case. Thus, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, in some cases the subgroup analysis looks at the same question in several ways.

CHAPTER 3

THE LEAP POPULATION

This chapter uses two quite different types of data to describe the teen parents who are subject to LEAP. Section I presents aggregate demographic data for the entire research sample based on information collected from the teens at the point of random assignment. Section II relies primarily on data obtained through discussions with small groups of LEAP teens in Ohio's three largest cities to examine the attitudes, aspirations, and everyday lives of a few of the teens in the larger sample.

I. Demographic Characteristics

This section examines the characteristics of the teens in the research sample based on information collected via the Teen Parent Information Sheet (TPIS) just before teens were randomly assigned. In addition to discussing the characteristics of the full Tier 1 sample, the section examines the population by age, by county, and by random assignment cohort.

A. Overall Characteristics and Differences by Age

Table 3.1 describes the characteristics of the research sample by age. As the table shows, teens were typically either 17 or 18 years old when they entered LEAP; the average age was 17.7. However, about one in four teens was 16 or younger. A relatively small fraction of the teens were 19 years old when they entered the sample, in part because LEAP eligibility rules did not include 19-year-olds until September 1990, partway through the sample intake period. In addition, 19-year-olds are more likely to have completed high school or a GED and are thus less likely to be eligible for LEAP.

Approximately half the teens reported that they were enrolled in a junior high, high school, or ABE/GED program when they entered the sample; this proportion decreases with age.[1] Although it is difficult to determine exactly what grade a teen should be in at a particular age, there is strong evidence that many of the teens in the sample were substantially behind grade level for their age. For example, on average, 19-year-olds in the sample had completed only the tenth grade. Among

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[1] As discussed further in Chapter 7, there is some evidence that the percentage of teens enrolled in school at baseline may be overstated owing to overreporting by the teens.

TABLE 3.1

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEAP RESEARCH SAMPLE, BY AGE AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Characteristic	Age 12 to 15	16	17	18	19	All Teens	
Schooling status							
Enrolled in school (%)	82.6	67.8	55.1	37.0	21.2	49.9	***
Average highest grade completed	8.1	9.0	9.7	9.9	10.0	9.6	***
Average number of months since last attended school (non-enrolled teens only)	7.4	10.7	14.9	19.1	25.1	17.8	***
AFDC case status							
Head of own AFDC case (%)	8.3	19.3	42.4	87.4	94.2	57.0	
On parent's AFDC case (%)	83.4	72.0	51.1	9.5	1.9	37.5	***
On another AFDC case (%)	8.3	8.6	6.5	3.1	3.9	5.5	
Ethnicity							
Black (%)	77.1	71.4	65.8	56.7	51.1	63.0	
White (%)	20.4	25.6	30.9	40.3	46.2	34.0	***
Hispanic (%)	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.4	1.6	2.3	
Other (%)	0.3	0.5	0.8	0.6	1.0	0.7	
Marital status							
Single, never married (%)	98.4	96.0	92.6	91.7	87.2	92.8	
Currently married (%)	1.2	2.8	4.7	4.8	7.9	4.4	***
Divorced, separated, or widowed (%)	0.4	1.2	2.7	3.5	4.9	2.8	
Number and age of children							
No children (a) (%)	17.1	10.9	6.4	4.6	6.7	7.5	
One child (%)	79.4	81.4	81.8	77.3	70.0	78.6	***
Two or more children (%)	3.4	7.7	11.9	18.1	23.3	13.8	
Average number of children	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1	***
Average age of youngest child (b) (months)	5.6	7.3	10.1	11.5	11.7	10.0	***
Prior-year earnings							
Any earnings during the prior 12 months (%)	11.0	13.2	15.9	15.9	15.8	15.0	**
Sample size	698	1,123	1,913	2,597	686	7,017	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets.

NOTES: This table includes teens in both the program and control groups in the Tier 1 counties.

A chi-square test or an F-test was applied to differences across age categories. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

For categorical variables (e.g., ethnicity or marital status), the significance level refers to differences in the distribution of such a variable across the age categories, as indicated by brackets.

(a) In September 1990, LEAP eligibility was extended to teens who are pregnant with their first child.

(b) For those with children only.

teens not in school, the average number of months out of school was about 18; among 19-year-olds, the average was more than two years. Thus, it seems clear that LEAP is demanding major changes in behavior, particularly for older teens.

The vast majority of teens of all ages have never been married (although the proportion of married teens increases somewhat with age), and most had only one child (or were pregnant with their first child) when they entered LEAP. This partly reflects the fact that teens become eligible for the program when they are pregnant with their first child, assuming they are receiving AFDC at that point. The teens with two or more children at baseline were either eligible when LEAP began (i.e., they could not have entered LEAP at the point of their first pregnancy because the program did not exist at the time), started receiving AFDC at some point after their second child was born, or were not identified as LEAP-eligible in a timely manner because of administrative delays. The proportion of teens with two or more children increases with age. As discussed in Chapter 7, many teens have had additional children since random assignment.

Overall, a little over one-third of the sample members are white and nearly two-thirds are black. However, since the average age of the white teens (not shown) is higher, the proportion of white teens is much higher in the older age categories; among 19-year-olds, the sample is nearly half white. Hispanics and other racial/ethnic groups make up a very small fraction of the research sample.

B. County Differences

Table 3.2 shows that the characteristics of the LEAP sample vary across counties in some important respects. Black teens make up more than 60 percent of the sample in Cuyahoga, Hamilton, and Lucas counties; Franklin County has a somewhat higher percentage of white teens, and the caseloads in Stark and the two rural counties are mostly white.

There is also substantial variation across counties in the percentage of teens who were enrolled in school at baseline. This figure ranges from a low of 44.6 percent in Franklin County to a high of 57.6 percent in Lucas County.

C. Cohort Differences

Table 3.3 shows the same demographic characteristics by random assignment period. September 1, 1990, is used as the cutoff date because LEAP eligibility was expanded to include 19-year-olds and teens pregnant with their first child on that date. Not surprisingly, there were very few teens in

TABLE 3.2

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEAP RESEARCH SAMPLE AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, BY COUNTY

Characteristic	County							All	
	Cuyahoga	Franklin	Hamilton	Lawrence	Lucas	Muskingum	Stark	Teens	
Age and schooling status									
Average age (years)	17.7	17.6	17.7	17.9	17.6	17.9	17.8	17.7	***
Enrolled in school (%)	50.5	44.6	49.2	51.0	57.6	56.3	49.3	49.9	***
Average highest grade completed	9.5	9.4	9.5	9.8	9.7	9.9	9.8	9.6	***
Average number of months since last attended school (non-enrolled teens only)	17.0	19.4	18.2	18.3	16.2	18.0	17.1	17.8	***
AFDC case status									
Head of own AFDC case (%)	55.5	53.0	61.8	51.0	56.7	62.2	62.9	57.0	***
On parent's AFDC case (%)	38.7	40.9	34.0	23.0	41.1	29.1	30.6	37.5	
On another AFDC case (%)	5.8	6.1	4.2	26.0	2.2	8.7	6.4	5.5	
Ethnicity									
Black (%)	74.2	55.3	70.1	2.0	61.5	8.7	33.5	63.0	***
White (%)	21.2	43.4	29.5	97.0	32.1	91.3	63.9	34.0	
Hispanic (%)	4.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	6.0	0.0	1.0	2.3	
Other (%)	0.5	1.1	0.3	1.0	0.4	0.0	1.5	0.7	
Marital status									
Single, never married (%)	95.4	92.4	93.7	49.5	96.8	77.0	84.7	92.8	***
Currently married (%)	2.7	4.1	3.8	40.4	1.9	17.5	9.5	4.4	
Divorced, separated, or widowed (%)	1.9	3.6	2.6	10.1	1.3	5.6	5.9	2.8	

(continued)

TABLE 3.2 (continued)

Characteristic	County							All Teens	
	Cuyahoga	Franklin	Hamilton	Lawrence	Lucas	Muskingum	Stark		
Number and age of children									
No children (a) (%)	8.9	9.9	3.9	9.1	3.9	15.1	7.6	7.5	
One child (%)	77.8	77.5	80.0	81.8	79.4	77.8	81.1	78.6	***
Two or more children (%)	13.3	12.7	16.1	9.1	16.7	7.1	11.3	13.8	
Average number of children	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.2	0.9	1.1	1.1	***
Average age of youngest child (b) (months)	10.4	9.5	10.3	8.2	9.8	9.3	9.3	10.0	**
Prior–year earnings									
Any earnings during the prior 12 months (%)	9.3	12.0	26.1	10.1	14.1	39.0	12.0	15.0	***
Sample size	2,681	1,397	1,469	100	760	127	483	7,017	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets.

NOTES: This table includes teens in both the program and control groups in the Tier 1 counties.

A chi–square test or an F–test was applied to differences across counties. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

For categorical variables (e.g., ethnicity or marital status), the significance level refers to differences in the distribution of such a variable across the counties, as indicated by brackets.

(a) In September 1990, LEAP eligibility was extended to teens who are pregnant with their first child.

(b) For those with children only.

TABLE 3.3

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEAP RESEARCH SAMPLE, BY RANDOM ASSIGNMENT DATE

Characteristic	Random Assignment Date July 1989 Through August 1990	Random Assignment Date September 1990 Through September 1991	All Teens	
Age and schooling status				
Average age (years)	17.6	17.8	17.7	***
Enrolled in school (%)	49.6	50.2	49.9	
Average highest grade completed	9.5	9.6	9.6	***
Average number of months since last attended school (non−enrolled teens only)	17.4	18.2	17.8	*
AFDC case status				
Head of own AFDC case (%)	53.9	60.8	57.0	***
On parent's AFDC case (%)	40.7	33.5	37.5	
On another AFDC case (%)	5.3	5.7	5.5	
Ethnicity				
Black (%)	65.7	59.8	63.0	***
White (%)	31.4	37.1	34.0	
Hispanic (%)	2.2	2.4	2.3	
Other (%)	0.6	0.7	0.7	
Marital status				
Single, never married (%)	93.2	92.4	92.8	*
Currently married (%)	3.9	5.0	4.4	
Divorced, separated, or widowed (%)	2.9	2.6	2.8	
Number and age of children				
No children (a) (%)	0.9	15.7	7.5	***
One child (%)	83.3	72.9	78.6	
Two or more children (%)	15.8	11.4	13.8	
Average number of children	1.2	1.0	1.1	***
Average age of youngest child (b) (months)	11.3	8.2	10.0	***
Prior−year earnings				
Any earnings during the prior 12 months (%)	16.0	13.8	15.0	**
Sample size	3,853	3,164	7,017	

(continued)

TABLE 3.3 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheets.

NOTES: This table includes teens in both the program and control groups in the Tier 1 counties.

A chi–square test or an F–test was applied to differences between random assignment periods. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

For categorical variables (e.g., ethnicity or marital status), the significance level refers to differences in the distribution of such a variable across the random assignment periods, as indicated by brackets.

(a) In September 1990, LEAP eligibility was extended to teens who are pregnant with their first child.

(b) For those with children only.

either of these categories in the sample before that date.[2] This explains the higher average age of the later cohort, and the larger proportion of white teens and case heads, two characteristics that are correlated with age.

The other important difference is that teens who met LEAP's eligibility criteria before the program began – the "on-board" teens described in Chapter 2 – were much more likely to have been randomly assigned during the earlier period. These teens are more likely to have had two or more children, and are less likely to have been enrolled in school at the point of random assignment than teens who became eligible after LEAP began.[3]

As indicated in Chapter 2, these differences suggest that results in subsequent chapters that are based on early cohorts, though critical to examining the longer-term impacts of LEAP, also reflect differences in the characteristics of teens who were randomly assigned at different points.

II. Attitudes and Expectations

The aggregate demographic data presented above are broadly descriptive. Through focus group discussions, it was possible to learn more about the lives and perspectives of a few program group teens in Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati, the three largest cities in Ohio. This information does not represent all LEAP teens, since only a small number attended focus groups and the sessions were held in only three cities. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 2, many of the teens who were invited to the sessions did not attend and those who did participate had all complied with LEAP to some extent. Nevertheless, the 55 teens who attended the discussions were a diverse group, ranging in age from 16 to 20. They included black, white, and Hispanic teens; teens enrolled in high schools and adult education programs, dropouts, and high school graduates; teens with one child and teens with two or three children; teens who had had extensive contact with LEAP and teens who had had little contact with the program. In addition, the teens' comments were typically in line with impressions gained from interviews with LEAP staff in these counties, and are generally consistent with other research on this population. Thus, while clearly limited, the data from the discussions provide useful contextual information for later sections on LEAP operations and impacts.

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[2] Counties were notified about the expansion of LEAP eligibility in the summer of 1990, and some of them began to work with teens in the new categories slightly before the rule officially took effect.

[3] The inclusion of 19-year-olds in the later cohort and "on-board" teens in the early cohort appears to cancel out some of the differences across cohorts. For example, there is no significant difference in the proportion of teens enrolled in school at baseline. This may be because both "on-board" teens and 19-year-olds are more likely than other teens to be out of school.

A. Aspirations for the Future

At the beginning of each discussion, focus group participants were asked to describe their "five-year dreams" – including topics such as where they hoped to be living, whether they hoped to be working (and, if so, at what job), and whether they expected to have additional children.

Almost all of the participants had specific career aspirations and definite ideas about where they wanted to be living (and with whom) in five years. Many of the focus group teens said they expected to be in nursing; other occupations that were mentioned included law, medicine, teaching, counseling, and computer/clerical work. Virtually all of these teens clearly understood the link between education and success in the labor market. In fact, most talked about the importance of going beyond high school to obtain occupational training or post-secondary education. Building a better life for their children was a powerful motivator for most of the participants.

Nevertheless, many of the participants did not have realistic ideas about how to reach their goals. Some did not understand the extent of additional schooling that would be required to enter their chosen occupation. Others had inflated expectations about the lifestyles they could lead given the jobs they expected to hold. For example, one Columbus teen, a 19-year-old with three children, said that her goal was to get "rich" and have a "big mansion." When asked how she expected to do this, she said she would "go to college, get my degree, take up something like legal secretary or something like that, do hair on the side."

Many of the participants said they wanted to be living somewhere other than their current city of residence in five years, and several emphasized that they wanted to have their own home. Although very few of the focus group teens were married, most said they expected or wanted to get married within five years, often to their current boyfriend. However, several also said they wanted to stay single, in some cases because they had had negative experiences with the fathers of their children. As discussed below, most of the participants said they did not want additional children within five years.

One of the most frequently mentioned goals was to be off AFDC. In general, the focus group participants expressed quite negative views of welfare, both because they felt that their grants do not provide enough income for them to live comfortably, and because they saw AFDC as demeaning or otherwise objectionable. Several referred derisively to relatives or friends whom they saw as likely to become long-term welfare recipients. Others said that welfare recipients should be required to work if jobs are available. As one Columbus teen put it:

> Some people just live on it [AFDC] and they find it a way of life, and I don't think it should be like that. If you are able to work you should be able to get out and get a job.

Although all were receiving AFDC when the discussions were held, the focus group teens seemed to see themselves as different from the welfare recipients they criticized, perhaps because nearly all of them expected to be off AFDC within five years.

For a small number of the focus group teens, circumstances in their daily lives made it difficult to even imagine five years into the future. For example, one Columbus 16-year-old said:

> Five years from now, I might not make it. I take a day at a time. I'm not trying to be funny, but with all these people out here getting killed, I might walk into school and I might be smashed up or something. So I just take a day at a time. That's what my mother always tells me. But five years from now if I be living, I want to live with my aunt in Chicago.

Although certainly not unfounded (staff report that several LEAP teens in the large urban counties have been murdered since the study began), this grim perspective was not typical of the teen parents who attended the discussions. Rather, most had clear hopes and dreams, and seemed relatively optimistic about their chances to improve their lives.

B. Everyday Life

For many of the focus group participants, everyday life seemed to be a struggle on many levels. Most of the participants, particularly those who were on their own, seemed to be living in extremely precarious economic circumstances. Several said that the basic AFDC grant for a mother and one child ($274) was almost completely consumed by rent payments and utility bills. Others said that they could not afford to take a public bus to an ABE/GED program that was not near their home. One teen said that living on a welfare grant was "punishment."

Given what the focus group teens said about their expenses and AFDC grant levels, it appeared that many of them may have had other sources of income or resources, although it was not usually apparent what these were. Ethnographic research on low-income minority populations in urban areas suggests that households in these communities tend to survive by juggling a complex and shifting set of income sources, and sharing money and familial responsibilities across a network of extended family members.[4] Indeed, many of the focus group participants talked about getting financial and other assistance from parents, older siblings, other relatives, boyfriends, or boyfriends' families.

Overall, the level of emotional and monetary support available to the teens varied greatly. For example, while some described close relationships with their mothers – in some cases, their mothers were assuming most of the responsibility for raising their children – others said they rarely talked to their mothers about anything personal. Several participants said that their mothers helped out with their children, but did so grudgingly, in some cases demanding to be paid for babysitting. A few had left their mother's homes under very difficult circumstances. Only a small number of the participants mentioned any interaction with their fathers.

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[4] See, e.g., Sullivan, 1989.

Similarly, while some of the focus group teens said that their boyfriends provided considerable assistance and support (despite the fact that, in some cases, they were not the fathers of all of the children), others did not mention the fathers of their children at all, or referred to them only in very negative terms. Finally, several of the teens described how they had lost contact with their former peer groups since they gave birth and left school, or complained that caring for their children prevented them from socializing with friends.

A few of the teens seemed to be coping with parenthood virtually alone, and many of them, particularly those who were out of school at the time, seemed bored, lonely, and isolated. For some, the focus group sessions themselves seemed like a rare opportunity to get out of the house, have someone else care for their children, and interact with other people their age. One 19-year-old participant did not respond when her son, who was being cared for in the next room, cried and screamed through most of the session. This teen, who said that she had been a very good student and missed school terribly since dropping out, said that she had "cried all the time" after giving birth and "wouldn't kiss my baby for a long time."

Given all of this, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the participants said that becoming a mother had forced them to grow up quickly. Although their perceptions of how to be a good parent may have varied, almost all of the focus group teens appeared to take parenthood very seriously, and expressed deep love and concern for their children. One teen described her feelings this way:

> You're 16 and pregnant, and you find out you're pregnant and you're scared and you don't have nowhere to run, and you don't believe in abortion, it's either you wise up and grow up or you don't keep that child, cause you've got someone else to care for. It ain't just you.

C. Attitudes Toward Childbearing and Birth Control

Part of each discussion focused on the teens' experiences before, during, and after their initial pregnancies, and their views about why they or other parents their age have additional children after giving birth once.

1. **The First Pregnancy.** Although most focus group participants described their initial pregnancy as unplanned, there were some typical patterns evident in the circumstances leading up to the pregnancy. For instance, it seems clear that many of the teens were having trouble in school before they became pregnant. Some had irregular attendance or disciplinary problems, others had poor grades, and a few said that they did not have many friends. Several of the teens had effectively stopped attending school in junior high.[5] For these teens, the pregnancy seemed like the final stage in a behavior pattern that was already leading them toward dropping out. In contrast, a few participants said they had been good students, were active in school activities, and were "popular." These young women tended to depict the pregnancy as being out of character for them.

The first pregnancy caused considerable confusion, fear, embarrassment, or anger for most of the teens. Some of them refused to tell classmates or teachers that they were pregnant. Others hid their pregnancies from their parents. In one extreme case, a teen, although living at home, never told her mother she was pregnant. The teen's mother ultimately found out when the teen, then eight months pregnant, fainted at her after-school job at a fast-food restaurant and had to be hospitalized.

Although almost all of the focus group teens' parents were surprised or angry when they discovered that the teens were pregnant, most were ultimately supportive, in some cases because they realized that their children's childbearing patterns were similar to their own. One teen described how her mother reacted when she found out about the pregnancy (which occurred when the teen was 14 years old):

> I got home, she slapped my face: "Get out!" I went over to my sister's house, crying. Two days later, she called me: "Come back home! I was young when I had kids, and I can't throw you out." I said: "If you feel that way, I'll just give it up." She said: "The hell you ain't going to give up my grandchild!"

Many of the participants talked about complications and health problems during their pregnancies. Several were put on bed rest by doctors or had toxemia or difficult births. Other research shows that teen mothers under age 18 are at greater risk of a variety of health problems during pregnancy.[6]

Some of the most striking statements in these discussions were made by teens who became pregnant at very young ages and were woefully unprepared. One teen who had first become pregnant at age 14 and now has three children described her first pregnancy this way:

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[5] Studies have shown that teenagers who have poor grades, low expectations about their educational future, and poor attendance are more likely to become sexually active at an early age and to have children as teens (Dryfoos, 1990).

[6] See Dryfoos, 1990. As discussed in Chapter 1, it is not clear that teenage pregnancy *per se* – as opposed to other characteristics of women who become pregnant as teens – causes these outcomes.

> I didn't really know too much about it so I learned the hard way. It's like feeling something moving in my stomach and I didn't know . . . but I had to grow up. Can't buy shoes, nice clothes, all that. You got to buy Pampers. You got to be thinking about that coat and that hat for the winter for your baby.

2. **Subsequent Childbearing**. A relatively small number of the focus group participants said they wanted to have additional children within the next five years. Most said the children they had were difficult to handle – in part because their economic circumstances were so difficult – and that they did not want more any time soon. As one 17-year-old put it:

> The two I got drive me nuts . . . I'll be 33 when my kids are 18. That's half my life. I ain't wasting no more for some kids.

However, with the exception of a few teens who had Norplant implants or said they faithfully took oral contraceptives, most of the teens did not appear to be consistently using any form of birth control.[7] Not surprisingly, several of the focus group teens had more than one child, and others said they were pregnant at the time of the sessions.[8]

Focus group participants offered a variety of opinions about why teen parents have additional children. Most agreed that boyfriends can play a major role in these decisions. They said that some young women get pregnant to try to keep a boyfriend, or because their boyfriends pressure them to have additional children (conversely, in some cases, boyfriends persuade teens not to get pregnant again). However, the teens suggested that a large proportion of births to teens are "accidents" or "mistakes."

It did not appear that access to birth control was a major problem in any of the cities.[9] However, the participants seemed to have narrow perceptions of birth control options and limited knowledge about the contraceptives they mentioned. In addition, participants said that many teens do not take action to obtain contraceptives, in some cases because they are afraid to talk to their mothers about the issue. With few exceptions, focus group teens discussed only three forms of contraception – Norplant, birth control pills, and tubal ligation procedures – and they mentioned several factors that reduce the likelihood that teens will use these contraceptives (or use them correctly). For example, participants said that many teens think oral contraceptives cause cancer, and also noted that teens often forget to take pills. Although some found it tempting, many of the focus group teens were wary of Norplant, and some complained that tubal ligation is not covered by Medicaid for women under 21 years old. Given these and other concerns, many of the participants seemed to feel that they had only limited control over whether they became pregnant.[10]

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[7] Other studies have shown that rates of contraceptive use are low among sexually active teens, including those who say that they do not want to get pregnant, and that rates of repeat pregnancy among teen parents are high (Hayes, 1987).

[8] In 1992, ODHS and the Ohio Department of Health developed the Ohio Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Community Planning Program, which offered planning grants for programs designed to reduce subsequent pregnancies among LEAP teens and their siblings.

[9] It should be noted that Medicaid only covers contraceptives that are prescribed by a physician.

III. Conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative data presented in this chapter suggest that LEAP has reached a broad, diverse group of teen parents. Although many of these teens were already attending school when they became eligible for LEAP, a large proportion – particularly among those who were 18 years old or older when they entered the program – have very poor school histories. LEAP demands major behavioral changes for these teens. Focus group data, although not representative of the full population, suggest that, despite their educational deficiencies and precarious economic circumstances, many of these teens have clear hopes and dreams for the future, and take their responsibilities as parents quite seriously. However, many of the teens also have unrealistic notions about how to achieve their goals.

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[10] In addition, a substantial number of teens said that they do not believe in abortion. Thus, when they become pregnant, they are likely to give birth.

PART II

LEAP PROGRAM OPERATIONS

CHAPTER 4

LEAP IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter examines how LEAP has been implemented by county human services agencies. It begins, in Section I, with an overview of LEAP's implementation, focusing first on the start-up period and then on the program's evolution during the time covered by this report. Section II focuses in detail on several important implementation issues, highlighting both operational challenges and strategies that have been devised to address them. Section III summarizes the key themes and relates the implementation findings to the process and impact results presented later in the report.

I. An Overview of Implementation

The first report on LEAP, which covered the initial 18 months of program operations, concluded that the research counties were generally quite successful in operationalizing a complex and innovative program model under tremendous time pressure. Although a variety of operational issues were identified in the report, most were seen as solvable; in fact, state and county staff had already taken a variety of steps to address them. In addition, the report described a number of areas in which counties (and, in some cases, school districts) went far beyond the basic LEAP model to offer a range of additional services to teens.

This report covers roughly the first three years of LEAP operations: from mid-1989 through mid-to-late 1992.[1] In general, the program has continued to make progress since the first report was completed, as county and state staff have devised strategies to address the difficulties that emerged in the early months. Although progress has not always been smooth and some problems persist, LEAP has operated more or less as planned during most of the period covered by this report. It is noteworthy, however, that program operations were much more efficient in year two and especially year three than during LEAP's first 12 months.

This section provides a broad summary of LEAP's implementation to date, identifying the major issues that emerged during the early months and describing the key events and trends that have affected the program's development.

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[1] The follow-up data on teens' school behavior and experiences with LEAP's incentives were all collected by early 1992. However, additional information on program implementation was obtained through interviews with county and state staff in the fall of 1992.

A. Program Start-Up

The timetable for translating the LEAP model into an operating program was extremely compressed. The first official notification counties received about the program was a concept paper circulated by ODHS in February 1989. This paper described the outlines of the program but left a number of key policy questions unresolved. Nevertheless, counties were expected to begin assessing eligible teens during the summer, and the school attendance requirement was slated to take effect in September. During the next several months, county staff worked to devise an organizational structure for LEAP, staff the program, identify eligible teens, and develop systems to collect attendance data from schools and administer the financial incentives. State officials (with input from the counties) completed work on the rules and regulations that would guide the program. These tasks were complicated by the innovative nature of LEAP; state and county-level staff had little relevant experience and few existing models on which to build the new program.

As might be expected, most counties were not fully prepared to implement LEAP when program operations began. Thus, although the program did begin functioning on or close to schedule in all counties, a variety of issues emerged during the early months. The most critical were:

- **Identifying eligible teens.** This was quite difficult, in large part because the statewide welfare computer system in place at the time lacked the capacity to identify teen parents who did not head AFDC cases. This hampered the state's planning efforts and prevented the counties from applying the LEAP mandate to the full eligible population.

- **Monitoring school attendance.** Although school districts were generally cooperative, the coordination between county welfare agencies and schools to obtain monthly attendance reports for LEAP teens was complex and time-consuming, particularly in larger cities with many education providers. Especially during the first school year of operations, some counties were unable to consistently obtain timely information.

- **Processing AFDC grant adjustments.** In most of the counties where LEAP case managers were not Income Maintenance workers (and therefore not responsible for processing grant adjustments), the program's financial incentives were not fully implemented. In these counties, many teens who failed to meet LEAP's requirements were not sanctioned, and some teens who earned bonuses did not receive them.

These issues, and a variety of other less serious ones, affected all the research counties to some degree. However, although serious, the difficulties did not cripple the program. Large numbers of teens were brought into LEAP, school attendance data were ultimately obtained for most of them, and a substantial fraction of the eligible caseload received sanctions or bonuses, even during the first year of operations. Despite the relatively large number of sanctions, active resistance to the program was relatively rare, and the legal challenges that overwhelmed the Wisconsin Learnfare program during its early years were largely absent.[2] Moreover, many of the counties developed strong proactive case management programs and instituted a variety of special services for teens that went far beyond the relatively limited requirements of the basic model.

Interestingly, the county programs developed quite differently, as managers and staff molded the flexible LEAP model to suit each agency's strengths, interests, and program philosophy. These differences could be observed in the organizational approaches counties chose, the relative emphasis they placed on proactive case management, their typical responses to noncompliance, and the level of staff involvement in teens' education choices. County differences also grew out of the widely varying policies of school districts in a number of areas that affected LEAP teens.

B. The Evolution of LEAP

LEAP operations have steadily become more efficient in most counties during the first three years of operations. Counties have experimented with new organizational approaches to improve the grant adjustment process, devised alternative means of identifying eligible teens, and enhanced their working relationships with schools. Perhaps most important, both LEAP staff and other county and school staff have grown more familiar with the program.

Although progress has been substantial, the trajectory of this development has not always been smooth. One factor affecting the pace of change has been the level of involvement of senior ODHS staff, which was quite high during the planning period and the first year or two of program operations. In interviews, county LEAP managers consistently reported less frequent contact with state officials and fewer examples of joint problem-solving during the third year.

Two other factors – the implementation of a new statewide computer system and rapid growth of the LEAP caseload – have also profoundly affected program operations during the period under study. Each of these is discussed below.

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[2] The first report speculated that the relative lack of controversy may have been attributable to LEAP's due process procedures, which probably avoided some erroneous sanctions, and to the presence of bonuses and case management in addition to sanctions.

1. **Computer System Conversion**. LEAP operations have been dramatically affected by the implementation of CRIS-E (Client Registry Information System–Enhanced), a highly sophisticated statewide public assistance computer system. Although the system was planned long before LEAP began and was partly implemented as early as May 1989 in some counties, CRIS-E's "LEAP subsystem" – which facilitates the translation of school attendance information into AFDC grant adjustments – was not available until the summer of 1991 at the earliest.[3] Since that time, CRIS-E has fundamentally changed the administrative processes involved in identifying LEAP-eligible teens and implementing the financial incentives.

County LEAP staff agree that CRIS-E has already greatly improved the operation of the program, particularly in the larger counties, where difficulties in the teen identification and grant adjustment processes were never fully resolved before conversion despite constant attention from LEAP staff. It seems clear that any state implementing a variation of LEAP without a CRIS-E-style data system would face many of the same problems that emerged in Ohio.[4]

2. **Program Expansion**. The overall size of the LEAP population and the number of cases assigned to each LEAP case manager have both increased substantially since roughly the end of the first year of operations. Several factors have contributed to this trend. First, for reasons discussed further below, the initial budget allocation for case management staff was based on an overestimate of the number of LEAP teens who would be identified and served. Thus, especially during the first year of operations, the number of cases per worker was smaller than planned. Second, in September 1990, LEAP eligibility was expanded to 19-year-olds and teens pregnant with their first child. (During the first year of operations, the program had served only teens who were already parents, and eligibility had ended at age 18.) This expansion was not accompanied by additional funding for case

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[3] CRIS-E was implemented in phases, with some counties converting the bulk of their AFDC cases before the LEAP subsystem became available. In these counties, CRIS-E affected LEAP operations for most of the 1991-92 school year. Other counties did not finish transferring cases to the new system until the summer of 1992, which means that CRIS-E did not dramatically affect LEAP operations until the 1992-93 school year.

[4] County staff have also registered some complaints about CRIS-E. The most common is that the system, which was designed primarily to manage the IM program, lacks the capability to produce management reports about the LEAP caseload. Thus, several of the larger counties maintain a second, PC-based data system side by side with CRIS-E. As this report is written, ODHS staff are working to produce a set of standard LEAP management reports for counties. However, county staff will still be unable to download and manipulate data on their own caseloads.

management staff, in part because it brought caseloads closer to the level originally envisioned by LEAP's planners. Third, improvements in the ability of counties to identify eligible teens, due in large part to the implementation of CRIS-E, have greatly increased the number of teens receiving LEAP services. Table 4.1 illustrates the growth of caseloads in the Tier 1 counties from fall 1990 to fall 1992. The figures for 1990 already reflect increases from the initial months of LEAP operations.

Larger caseloads have a number of implications for staff activities. The most apparent is that case managers tend to have less personal contact with each teen as caseloads rise. In addition, with the pace of referrals growing, case managers report that they spend more time assessing newly eligible teens and less time working with existing cases.[5] Finally, in addition to increasing the absolute number of eligible cases, the 1990 program expansion changed the nature of the LEAP population by including 19-year-olds, who are more apt to be out of school and are very unlikely to return to traditional high schools.[6]

Staff workloads have also been affected by a change in the exemption rules that accompanied the eligibility expansion in 1990. Under the revised rules, teens are exempt from LEAP during the second and third trimesters of a pregnancy. (This applies to both the first and subsequent pregnancies.) Pregnant teens are permitted to volunteer for LEAP, in which case they may receive bonuses for attending school but will not be sanctioned. Originally, pregnancy was not a valid exemption reason, although teens with problem pregnancies could be exempted for medical reasons.[7] As will be discussed further in Chapter 5, the pregnancy exemption has increased the overall proportion of teens who are exempt from LEAP.[8] This policy has generally been unpopular with LEAP staff, particularly as it affects subsequent (as opposed to first) pregnancies. Staff maintain that the exemption sends a perverse message to teens about the consequences of additional pregnancies, and also may cause LEAP to "lose" a teen for almost a full year (because teens are also exempt for three months after they give birth). As discussed earlier, there is no evidence to date that LEAP has led to an increase in subsequent childbearing, although the data available for this analysis are

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[5] Some managers suggest that, as staff become more familiar with CRIS-E, the new system will allow them to reduce the amount of time they spend on administrative tasks, freeing more time for activities such as counseling and outreach.

[6] See Table 3.3 for a more complete description of the differences between teens randomly assigned before and after September 1, 1990.

[7] This change was judged necessary in order to bring LEAP into compliance with federal JOBS regulations.

[8] The higher exemption rate may mitigate the effect of rising caseloads on staff workloads to some extent.

TABLE 4.1

LEAP CASELOADS AND CASE MANAGEMENT STAFFING LEVELS, FALL 1990 AND FALL 1992

	Approximate Number of LEAP Cases		Number of LEAP Case Managers (a)	
County	Fall 1990	Fall 1992	Fall 1990	Fall 1992
Cuyahoga	1,300	1,800	15 full-time (b)	15 full-time (b)
Franklin	500	900	12 full-time	14 full-time
Hamilton	800	1,200	12 full-time	12 full-time
Lawrence	50	50	4 part-time (c, d)	4 part-time (c, d)
Lucas	400	600	23 part-time (d)	21 part-time (d)
Muskingum	50	50	1 part-time (d)	1 part-time (d)
Stark	200	270	2 full-time	2 full-time

SOURCE: MDRC field research.

NOTES: (a) In all counties, additional staff, including clerical aides and managers, also play important roles in LEAP and affect the workload of case managers.

(b) In Cuyahoga County, six additional LEAP caseworkers are outstationed in Cleveland high schools. Students in these schools are assigned to both an office-based case manager and a school-based outreach worker.

(c) LEAP case managers in Lawrence County are JOBS workers whose caseloads consist primarily of adult JOBS participants. However, GRADS teachers in local schools also provide case management services under contract to LEAP.

(d) LEAP case managers in these counties are responsible for both LEAP and non-LEAP cases.

preliminary. Chapter 7 examines whether the impact of LEAP differs for teens who have children after entering the program.

C. The LEAP Experiences of Research Sample Members

This information about LEAP's development suggests several points regarding the LEAP experiences of teens in the research sample. First, teens who entered the sample early (i.e., during the first year of operations) and who were 18 years old at the time, were primarily exposed to LEAP during a period when the financial incentives were applied least efficiently.[9] If these teens were enrolled in school, attendance reports may not have been regularly available, and they may have received presumptive bonuses even when they failed to attend. If they did not comply with LEAP, they may not have been sanctioned because of administrative difficulties. However, in many counties it is likely that these teens had fairly frequent contact with LEAP staff because client/staff ratios were relatively low during this period.

Teens who entered LEAP after the first school year of operations, or who entered earlier but remained eligible longer, experienced a gradually more efficient program, and their welfare grants were more predictably tied to their school attendance.[10] Rising caseloads probably decreased the amount of personal contact between staff and teens, but proactive case management did not disappear. Finally, these teens were more likely to be exempted from LEAP if they became pregnant after entering the program.

For the most part, the improvements attributable to CRIS-E occurred after the period covered by this report. In fact, because the conversion process itself was so complex, in some counties the LEAP financial incentive system actually functioned worse during the transition, and this may be reflected in the results for the latest sample members. This was particularly true in Cuyahoga County, which has the largest AFDC caseload and converted to CRIS-E late under extreme time pressure. Together, these factors suggest that LEAP functions more smoothly today than it did during the period reflected in this analysis. Thus, this study represents a conservative test of the potential effectiveness of this model.

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[9] Some of these teens could have "aged out" of LEAP and then "aged back in" after the 1990 rule change, thereby gaining some experience in a more mature LEAP program.

[10] However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the follow-up period for each teen is limited to 12 to 18 months (depending on the data source). Thus, the steady improvement in LEAP operations, although experienced by younger teens who entered during the start-up period, is not always reflected in the analysis.

II. Implementation Issues

This section focuses in detail on three major areas of LEAP's implementation: identifying eligible teens, developing internal operations, and establishing linkages between schools and human services agencies. It describes the key issues and challenges counties have faced in each area, the strategies they developed to address important problems, and the results of these efforts.

A. Identification of Eligible Teens

Most of the problems counties have experienced in this area stem from the fact that a large fraction of LEAP-eligible teens do not head welfare cases. Since almost all previous human services programs and services were targeted to case heads, the statewide welfare computer system that preceded CRIS-E (known as the Client Registry Information System, or CRIS) was unable to identify teen parents who received assistance on someone else's grant. Specifically, CRIS did not have the capacity to record information about the relationships among members of a case. Thus, for example, when a case included a 35-year-old woman, a 17-year-old woman, and a 2-year-old boy, it was impossible to determine from information stored in the system whether the baby was the brother or the son of the 17-year-old.

1. Teen Identification Problems in the Early Months. This problem first surfaced in the spring and summer of 1989, when state and county staff attempted to identify and count the existing pool of LEAP-eligible teens. Because a computerized process was not possible, it was necessary to print lists of all cases that included both female teenagers and young children.[11] County staff manually reviewed casefiles to determine if there was indeed a teen parent on each of these cases and, if so, whether she appeared to have completed school. Thousands of cases were reviewed in this manner, and the process was subject to considerable error.[12]

Similar problems hindered the identification of teens who became eligible for LEAP after the program began. Income Maintenance staff were responsible for identifying these teens in the course of normal welfare eligibility procedures, coding them with an "L" in CRIS and sending a paper referral to LEAP staff for each case. However, IM workers had little experience focusing on non-case heads and, in addition, were required to remember and apply the complex eligibility rules for several special programs in addition to handling their normal responsibilities. In the end, a large number of eligible teens were missed, either because they were never identified and coded by IM staff or because their names were never sent to LEAP staff. Some of these teens were later identified by school staff or other outside agencies.[13]

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[11] Males are eligible for LEAP, but most teenage fathers are not custodial parents.

[12] In addition to identifying many cases that did not include eligible teens, there is also evidence that the lists of potentially eligible teens, which were drawn from CRIS, also missed some cases that did include eligible teens. It is unclear why this occurred.

Problems in identifying eligible teens had several implications. First, without reliable information, it was difficult for ODHS staff to accurately estimate the number of LEAP-eligible teens in order to develop an initial budget for program staffing. As noted earlier, the number of teens ultimately identified as eligible was much smaller than projected, which meant that county operating budgets were unexpectedly generous during the first year of operations. Second, many eligible teens did not receive LEAP services. Thus, the program (and, consequently, the evaluation) did not cover the full universe of teen parents on AFDC.[14] Finally, some teens were identified much later than they should have been. It may be that LEAP's financial incentives are more effective when teens are reached early, before they have been out of school for an extended period. If this is the case, delays in identification may decrease the program's effectiveness.

Despite these difficulties, the counties were able to identify thousands of eligible teens, and LEAP operated on a large scale from its earliest days. By the end of the first school year of operations, more than 5,000 teens had been randomly assigned in the research counties, suggesting that roughly 7,500 eligible teens had been identified statewide by that point.

2. **Strategies**. Counties took a variety of steps to improve the teen identification process. Some focused on better training for IM workers. In others, LEAP staff routinely reviewed lists of teens participating in other agency programs with overlapping populations to find LEAP-eligible teens who had not been identified. Still others focused on disseminating information in their communities

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[13] It is not possible to precisely estimate the fraction of eligible teens who have been missed. However, in comparing the identification efforts of counties that were relatively successful with others, it appears that a few counties identified as few as half of all eligible teens during the 18-month period covered by the first LEAP report (July 1989 through January 1991). It seems likely that most counties did substantially better than this, but did not come close to finding all eligibles. Some of the missed teens were eventually identified through alternative means or when counties converted their cases to CRIS-E. Others may have aged out of LEAP and never been identified.

[14] It is not entirely clear how this will affect the impact estimates. On the one hand, in some counties the LEAP caseload may have been skewed toward "easier" cases (i.e., those who were enrolled in school) because, as will be discussed below, staff relied heavily on referrals from teachers to substitute for IM referrals. On the other hand, since identification problems tend to be more severe for teens who are not case heads – who are typically younger and more likely to be in school – it is possible that the program served a disproportionate number of out-of-school teens.

to increase the number of referrals from staff in schools and community agencies, and to promote voluntary enrollment by teens. Although these steps did identify additional teens, this problem persisted to varying degrees until the implementation of CRIS-E was complete.

By all accounts, CRIS-E has dramatically improved the ability of counties to identify LEAP-eligible teens. The new system requires IM staff to record information about school completion – and, more importantly, about the relationships among case members – during AFDC application interviews and whenever there are changes or additions to a case. The system uses this information to identify and code LEAP-eligible teens and then automatically alerts LEAP managers to new referrals. Staff have identified some "bugs" in the system, and it is of course still subject to some human error. For example, IM staff can code relationships incorrectly or erroneously record a teen as a high school graduate. However, staff in all counties suggest that the number of teens who "slip through the cracks" is now quite small.

B. Development of an Internal Structure

The functions required to fully implement LEAP transcend the traditional division of responsibilities in a county human services department. Specifically, LEAP requires frequent welfare grant adjustments, which are handled by IM staff; case management, which is usually provided by JOBS or Social Services workers; and support services such as child care, which are generally assigned to a specialized Day Care Unit. Thus, in developing an organizational structure for LEAP, counties needed to devise strategies to blend these functions, either by consolidating them and training specialized staff to take on additional responsibilities, or by separating them and developing mechanisms to facilitate communication across divisions.

The LEAP regulations do not specify a certain staffing structure for the program. Rather, each county was given the flexibility to tailor LEAP to its own circumstances. Counties chose a wide variety of organizational approaches. These strategies were influenced by each county's vision of LEAP, the previous experience of staff in key divisions, the level of priority placed on LEAP, and other factors.

A few counties, most notably Franklin, placed LEAP in the IM division and assigned responsibility for both case management and grant adjustments to a special unit of IM workers. Resources were then used to train these staff to provide intensive case management services to teens in addition to their regular eligibility-related activities. This "integrated" approach was somewhat unusual, since income maintenance and social services functions have been separated in most areas since the early 1970s.[15] The more common approach was to separate the key functions by placing LEAP in the Social Services or JOBS unit, assigning case management duties to workers in that unit, and allowing grant adjustments to be handled by the regular IM worker responsible for each case, upon notification by LEAP staff. A few counties chose to contract key functions to outside agencies. For example, Lawrence County contracted with GRADS, a school district program for teen parents (discussed further below), to handle most case management functions for teens in high school. Table 4.2 includes basic information about the LEAP staffing structure in each of the Tier 1 research counties.

All of these approaches have advantages and disadvantages, and each has had specific implications for which of the key LEAP tasks can be performed most effectively. The following sections focus on each of these critical tasks – case management, grant adjustment, and support services – individually, describing how organizational and other factors have affected county performance.

1. Case Management. The LEAP regulations specify that each LEAP teen must be assigned to a case manager, but offer substantial flexibility to counties in defining the role of these staff. At a minimum, case managers need to conduct assessments, grant exemptions when necessary, monitor teens' attendance, and determine when sanctions and bonuses are appropriate.

A few counties chose to define the responsibilities of case managers relatively narrowly, focusing mainly on the basic functions described above. However, most of the research counties adopted a more expansive definition of case management, which included regular personal contact with a subset of teens and, in some counties, home visits, counseling, and special activities such as graduation parties, speakers, and discussion groups. A few counties developed especially innovative organizational strategies to extend the program's reach. For example, Cuyahoga County outstationed LEAP staff in six Cleveland high schools to facilitate personal contact with teens, and Cuyahoga and Hamilton counties both hired outside agencies to conduct outreach to noncompliant teens.[16]

In general, the larger urban counties adopted the most expansive definitions of case management. This may have been related to the philosophies of key staff, the perceived needs of the target population in these areas, or to the fact that LEAP tends to have a stronger identity when

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[15] As part of the national JOBS evaluation, Franklin County is testing the effectiveness of an integrated case management approach in the JOBS program for adults.

[16] Hamilton County's contract was canceled after the first year of operations. Since then, the county has used student interns to conduct outreach to noncompliant teens.

TABLE 4.2

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES OF COUNTY LEAP PROGRAMS, FALL 1992

County	Location of LEAP Within the CDHS	Job Position of LEAP Case Managers	Staff Responsible for AFDC Grant Adjustments
Cuyahoga	Employment Services (with JOBS)	Social worker	Regular IM staff
Franklin	Income Maintenance	IM worker	LEAP case managers
Hamilton	JOBS	JOBS worker	Regular IM staff
Lawrence	JOBS	JOBS worker, GRADS teacher	Regular IM staff
Lucas	Social Services	Social Services worker	Regular IM staff
Muskingum	JOBS	JOBS worker	Regular IM staff
Stark	JOBS	JOBS worker	Regular IM staff

SOURCE: MDRC field research.

it is staffed by several full-time workers. In the smaller counties, such as Lawrence and Muskingum, the LEAP caseload is not large enough to warrant a full-time staff person, and the program tends to be subsumed into the larger JOBS program for adults. In addition, proactive case management has typically been easiest to achieve in counties that assigned this role to more experienced staff. For example, Lucas County has developed a particularly service-oriented approach. There, case management is handled by Social Services workers who operated a program for teen parents prior to LEAP.

Most counties have continued to emphasize proactive case management throughout the first three years of operations. However, this has become increasingly difficult as LEAP caseloads have increased. During the past year, some counties have abandoned earlier requirements for personal contact between staff and clients. Others, such as Lucas and Hamilton, have implemented new requirements or set up monitoring systems to ensure that staff maintain contact.

Nevertheless, counties have continued to develop innovative strategies to supplement the LEAP model, even in the face of higher caseloads. In Hamilton County, LEAP staff helped to create a Teen Parent Forum, which allows teens to develop their own activities. Recent events have included a college tour and a museum visit. Hamilton staff also planned a large fair for teens and their families that included food, entertainment, and opportunities for teens to register for educational and social services. Several hundred teens attended this event, which was implemented entirely with donated goods and services, and staff used the opportunity to conduct dozens of annual assessment interviews. Stark County uses gifts donated by local businesses to reward cooperative teens, and Cuyahoga County helped 40 teens obtain summer internships with the County Board of Commissioners.[17] Franklin County entered into an agreement with Planned Parenthood of

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[17] ODHS originally intended LEAP to include guaranteed summer jobs. This was to have been accomplished by giving LEAP teens priority in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) operated under the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). During the planning process, it became clear that this could not be accomplished on a statewide basis. Thus, in the final regulations, counties were instructed to "develop a working relationship with JTPA to promote and coordinate the hiring of LEAP participants in the JTPA summer job programs." In addition, Ohio obtained a federal waiver to allow SYEP earnings to be disregarded for teens when calculating their AFDC grants.

Although most counties have taken steps to develop linkages with JTPA and inform LEAP teens about SYEP positions, the take-up rate has generally been low. In the survey, program group members were no more likely than controls to report having worked during the previous summer. In most counties, LEAP staff have chosen not to push teens to take jobs, since many teens prefer to spend the summer with their children. In addition, some staff speculate that SYEP jobs are seen as undesirable.

Columbus to provide an education program for LEAP teens, stressing parenting and family planning.

Finally, a few counties have also begun to focus more heavily on the transition from LEAP into the regular JOBS program for teens who reach age 20 or obtain a high school diploma or GED. Although most of these teens are not required to participate in JOBS because they have children under 3 years old, JOBS offers opportunities for further education or training to graduates, and continued support services to teens who are already enrolled in education programs when they age out of LEAP. This transition is potentially critical if LEAP is to translate education gains into improved labor market performance.

Most counties routinely inform teens about the services available to them through JOBS. In Hamilton, Lawrence, and Muskingum counties, where the LEAP case managers are JOBS workers, some teens remain with the same case manager as they move from one program to the other. It appears that this transition may be more difficult to manage in counties where LEAP is not housed in or near the JOBS program.

2. **Grant Adjustments**. Although they have sometimes been able to develop strong proactive case management systems, most of the counties that chose to separate the key LEAP functions and assign responsibility for case management to JOBS or Social Services staff have been unable to fully implement the financial incentive system. In these counties, responsibility for grant adjustments is often dispersed among dozens, or even hundreds, of IM workers, each of whom has a handful of LEAP cases in a total caseload of 300 or more. Before CRIS-E was implemented, LEAP staff sent forms to IM workers requesting specific grant changes when appropriate, but these requests often received low priority and were not processed or processed late.[18] These difficulties were most severe in some of the larger counties – notably Cuyahoga – where, in late 1990, staff estimated that only 50 percent of LEAP sanction requests were processed in a timely manner. In contrast, this problem generally did not affect counties such as Franklin, where LEAP case managers are IM workers and process grant changes themselves.

Obviously, an inability to process sanction and bonus requests has negative consequences. LEAP staff complain that they lose credibility with teens when promised grant changes do not occur. In addition, delays in processing requests increase the already lengthy lag between teens' behavior and the financial reward or penalty (discussed in Chapter 1). This doubtless causes confusion among teens and may weaken the ability of the incentives to affect behavior.

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[18] Similar problems in processing grant adjustments also affect JOBS programs in Ohio and elsewhere. The implications of these difficulties are more severe for LEAP because grant adjustments are so frequent.

During the first two years of program operations, county LEAP managers developed a number of strategies to improve this situation. One approach, adopted by Hamilton and Lawrence counties, was to enhance communications by consolidating LEAP cases with a small group of designated IM workers who could work more closely with LEAP staff. Another, chosen by Lucas County, was to train LEAP case managers to implement the grant adjustments themselves. Cuyahoga County focused on developing a sophisticated system to obtain accurate information on which LEAP requests were not processed, and used these data to work with IM supervisors to improve the process. Some of these strategies seemed to result in modest improvement but, as with the teen identification process, the problem typically persisted until CRIS-E was fully implemented.[19]

Nearly all counties report that, despite initial "bugs," CRIS-E has already improved the grant adjustment process. LEAP staff enter information on school attendance into standard screens in the LEAP subsystem, and this automatically generates an "alert" to the appropriate IM worker to recalculate the AFDC grant when a sanction or bonus is required.[20] Although the IM worker maintains ultimate control over the case, and must still take action to process the grant adjustment, the amount of work required to do this is minimal. Perhaps more important, it is relatively easy for LEAP staff to follow up and inquire as to whether changes have been made correctly.

Interestingly, some LEAP managers also suggest that CRIS-E affects the grant adjustment process by reducing staff discretion. Although the LEAP incentive system appears to be relatively straightforward, its implementation is profoundly affected at the "street level" by staff attitudes and practices, which vary across counties. In interviews, LEAP staff, while generally supportive of the program's approach, voiced a range of views about the appropriateness of sanctioning. Doubts were expressed most frequently in counties such as Lucas, where LEAP staff are Social Services workers. In practice, staff in some counties are more likely to "give teens a second chance" when they fail to meet the program's requirements, at least initially, while others tend to "go by the book." Although staff maintain the ultimate ability to grant "good cause" excuses when teens miss appointments or have poor attendance, managers suggest that CRIS-E makes it more difficult for case managers to "let cases slide" and easier for supervisors to review staff actions on particular cases. They speculate that this may reduce the level of variation across counties, and increase the sanction rate in counties where staff tended to give teens greater latitude.

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[19] These special organizational approaches have generally been discontinued under CRIS-E.

[20] The earlier CRIS system also had a LEAP tracking subsystem. However, it was not linked to the AFDC payments system. Thus, LEAP staff were required to enter information on LEAP teens into CRIS for tracking purposes, but grant adjustments still had to be requested via paper forms sent to IM workers.

3. **Child Care**. Past studies of welfare-to-work initiatives for adults have found that participants often do not utilize child care subsidies offered by these programs. For example, at an early point in California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program, only 10 percent of mandatory registrants (37 percent of those who actually participated in a GAIN activity) used program-funded child care.[21]

Nevertheless, there were reasons to believe that demand for this service might be higher among LEAP teens. First, virtually all of these teens have pre-schoolage children. In contrast, GAIN, like most of the other welfare-to-work programs that have been studied, used to exempt clients with children under age 6.[22] Among voluntary participants in GAIN, most of whom had pre-schoolage children, 68 percent of those who participated in a GAIN activity used program-funded child care. Second, by mandating regular school attendance, LEAP demands a greater time commitment from many teens than does a typical welfare-to-work program. Third, since a substantial proportion of LEAP teens were already in school when they entered the program, participation rates in LEAP were bound to be relatively high. Thus, LEAP planners budgeted substantial funds for child care (more than $9 million in fiscal year 1990), on the assumption that a majority of the teens who attended school would require assistance.

Despite these factors, the proportion of LEAP teens using program-funded child care assistance has been relatively low, and only a fraction of the funding budgeted for child care has been spent. Staff agree that there are two principal reasons for this. First, like many parents, LEAP teens are often reluctant to entrust the care of their children – who are likely to be infants or toddlers – to strangers, and thus prefer to have relatives or close friends provide care (this is discussed further in Chapter 6). Second, Ohio rules stipulate that public funds can be used only to pay for child care provided by licensed or certified providers.[23] Most of the informal arrangements teens make do not meet these criteria, and thus are not eligible for reimbursement.[24]

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[21] See Martinson and Riccio, 1989.

[22] Under federal JOBS rules, some single parents with pre-schoolage children are now required to participate in program activities. However, child care utilization has not been studied for this group.

[23] In several other welfare programs (including GAIN and the Teenage Parent Demonstration), both licensed and unlicensed providers may receive child care subsidies.

[24] A more flexible reimbursement policy was tested in several counties, including Hamilton and Franklin, in 1991-92. In addition, since 1991, it has been possible to pay for child care provided by LEAP teens' relatives who are in the process of becoming certified providers (i.e., payment can begin before the certification process is complete).

Considerable controversy surrounds this issue in Ohio. Defenders of the current restrictions argue that certified or licensed providers are more likely to offer safe, developmentally appropriate care. Critics point out the inconsistency in a system that defines certain households as unacceptable child care facilities, but allows children to be raised and live in these same households.

A few counties – notably Cuyahoga – appear to have experienced shortages of licensed or certified child care slots, particularly for infants. These shortages have been particularly acute in specific geographic areas, which means that teens who do use program-funded care may face complex "transportation triangles" when they attempt to travel from home to a distant child care provider and then to school. One alternative that is attractive to some teens – on-site child care facilities in schools or ABE/GED programs – is not widely available, and these facilities may be difficult to access because babies are generally not allowed to ride on school buses. Finally, in some of the larger counties, poor intra-agency linkages between child care units and LEAP staff have created confusion and have limited the ability of some teens to access child care.

It is not clear whether the low usage of program-funded child care has affected teens' school attendance or the welfare of their children. Some contend that teens who use informal arrangements miss school more often because providers who are not paid have fewer incentives to offer reliable care. In contrast, others point out that many child care centers do not accept sick children, and also suggest that teens will attend school regularly when they feel comfortable with their child care arrangement. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

C. Linkages Between Schools and Human Services Agencies

Implementation of LEAP requires much closer linkages between county human services agencies and school districts than existed in most areas before the program began. Because the public education system is highly decentralized, development of these linkages was, of necessity, a local process. This section discusses three key aspects of the welfare-education relationship: attendance reporting, the availability and accessibility of education options, and the role of GRADS, an Ohio Department of Education program for pregnant and parenting students.

1. **Attendance Reporting**. Most LEAP teens attend high schools or ABE/GED programs operated by public school districts. For the most part, these districts have been willing to furnish the attendance data necessary to trigger the financial incentives, and, from the beginning, counties have been able to obtain this information for most teens (although not always in a timely manner). However, in nearly all counties, the process of working with schools to develop attendance monitoring

systems was complex and time-consuming, and these arrangements sometimes broke down, especially during the first school year of operations, leading to the issuance of many presumptive bonuses. In general, attendance reporting for teens in traditional high school programs has been most consistent, while obtaining data for teens in ABE/GED programs has presented the most problems. These difficulties have been most acute in large, urban counties, where teens are dispersed among dozens of education programs.

Several factors have contributed to the difficulties counties experienced in establishing and maintaining attendance monitoring systems. These include:

- **Early communications difficulties.** In their initial dealings with school districts, some LEAP staff were not prepared for the issues created by the highly decentralized nature of the education system. When they approached school districts to discuss the need for monthly attendance reporting in 1989, some LEAP staff were surprised to find that some school staff did not know about the program.[25] Although district officials were generally supportive during these meetings, information about LEAP did not always flow from the district offices to the school buildings where actual attendance records were maintained. This meant that attendance reporting procedures were typically not in place when school began in September.

- **LEAP data system issues.** ODHS staff use the statewide data system to generate lists of LEAP teens enrolled in each school in Ohio and mail these lists to the schools from Columbus. School staff are asked to fill in attendance information on each teen and to return the lists to the local county human services agency. Unfortunately, LEAP staff in most counties initially had difficulty entering school enrollment data on LEAP teens into CRIS and, even when they did, the attendance forms were often inaccurate or mailed late. In addition, since ODHS assumed that county staff had already developed attendance reporting procedures with schools, the lists arrived in school buildings addressed to principals and bearing no return address or instructions; consequently, they were often not completed on time.

- **Limited attendance reporting capacity.** Some schools and education programs did not routinely maintain the information needed by LEAP. This was particularly likely to be true of ABE/GED programs, many of which previously served adult volunteers and did not maintain careful attendance records for individual students. Even those that did track attendance usually did not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences since they were not required to do so. Furthermore, in

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[25] Two letters about LEAP were mailed to school superintendents, one in March 1989, co-signed by the Director of ODHS and the State Superintendent of Schools, and another from the Superintendent in September 1989. In addition, the Ohio At-Risk Linkage Team Project was formed at the state level to promote local linkages between education, training, and human services agencies serving at-risk populations.

> large cities, teens tended to be scattered among dozens of ABE/GED programs, some of which met in churches, community centers, or libraries. These facilities often had no storage space, which meant that teachers carried records with them. Although all of a school district's ABE/GED programs are usually coordinated by one central office, these offices tended to have very limited clerical staff, and it was difficult for them to regularly obtain attendance records from program-level staff.
>
> The problem was somewhat different for students in traditional high schools, which typically maintain accurate individual-level data on student attendance. Here, definitional issues emerged. For example, in some districts, students are counted as present for a day if they attend homeroom, which often meets early in the morning, even if they miss all the rest of their classes. Although this may serve the district's purposes, it clearly does not conform to the spirit of the LEAP attendance rules. In addition, as in the ABE/GED programs, many schools have limited clerical staff.

Overall, attendance monitoring has steadily improved during the first three years of LEAP operations. However, problems remain in some counties, and no one data collection procedure has been universally successful. During the first two school years, some counties attempted to improve attendance reporting by devising systems to obtain information from several schools or programs through one central location. These efforts were focused on major urban districts, where the LEAP population is heavily concentrated. For example, Lucas County LEAP staff attempted to obtain attendance data for all Toledo high school students from a district-wide computer system, and Cuyahoga County staff discussed a similar arrangement with the Cleveland Public Schools. Several counties devised procedures to obtain information from the district's adult education office for all students in school district ABE/GED programs.

In general, centralized reporting arrangements for high school students have not been successful. Cuyahoga County's efforts never came to fruition, and Lucas County abandoned its process after two unsuccessful years. Now, most counties focus their data collection efforts on the school-building level, often assigning LEAP staff to work with particular schools, in the hope that they can develop personal relationships with attendance clerks and other school staff that will improve reporting.

Improvements in attendance reporting for ABE/GED students have been facilitated by the fact that increasing numbers of adult JOBS clients attend these programs. In some counties, JOBS funds are used to contract for slots in ABE/GED programs operated by school districts, and these contracts often include support for the clerical functions associated with tracking attendance. In addition, the influx of JOBS clients means that many ABE/GED teachers and staff have grown more accustomed to both working with clients who are required to attend their programs, and to reporting attendance to human services agencies. However, county LEAP programs differ in the extent to which they are willing to steer teens toward the ABE/GED programs that have better reporting capability. For example, LEAP staff in Hamilton County strongly urge teens to attend JOBS-funded ABE/GED programs, both because these programs are equipped to monitor and report attendance and because they offer at least 20 hours of instruction per week. In contrast, Cuyahoga County does not make any special effort to steer teens toward JOBS-funded programs, even though it is quite difficult to obtain attendance data from other providers.

The ODHS process for requesting attendance information has also improved. This is partly a result of the implementation of CRIS-E and partly owing to a new system whereby forms are mailed to schools at the beginning of each month and are then updated later to reflect new enrollees.

2. **The Availability of Education Options.** Many LEAP teens, particularly those who have stopped attending school, have failed in the traditional education system and are unwilling to return to this setting. While most high schools are willing to accept returning dropouts (they are legally obliged to do so), for many of the teens in LEAP, the existence of alternative educational opportunities is a key factor in determining whether they enroll in and attend school.

The availability and accessibility of education options varies considerably across counties and districts, and is strongly influenced by school district policies and practices. For example, some districts, particularly those in large cities, sponsor a variety of vocational programs and alternative high school diploma programs, some of which are geared specifically to teen parents. Other districts offer few such options.

The availability of ABE/GED programs, which are the most common alternative to traditional high school, also varies from county to county. Moreover, the programs that do exist are not always accessible to all LEAP teens because these programs are technically prohibited from serving teenagers under 18 years old unless they have been officially released from school.[26] Although district policies vary in this regard – a few districts routinely release 16- and 17-year-olds from high school and allow them to enroll in ABE/GED programs without proof of employment – in some areas, younger LEAP teens who are far behind grade level for their age face a choice between reenrolling in the school from which they dropped out or facing a sanction.

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[26] This arises from a complex interaction of state and federal laws. Essentially, federal law prohibits the use of funds authorized under the Adult Education Act for students who are not beyond the age of compulsory school attendance. Since compulsory school attendance extends to age 18 in Ohio, programs using federal funds cannot legally serve 16- and 17-year-olds unless they have been formally released from school. By state law, teens can only be released from school if they are working full time.

Finally, the quality of education alternatives varies. For example, some school district-sponsored alternative programs are widely perceived to be "dumping grounds" for students with disciplinary problems. Some ABE/GED programs offer instruction for as little as two hours per week, and private proprietary schools sometimes lure students into signing contracts that put them deeply in debt. And, of course, the quality of education in traditional high schools also varies. As noted earlier, some LEAP coordinators insist that case managers steer teens toward programs that are considered to be of higher quality or that meet more frequently. For example, LEAP teens in Toledo are permitted to enroll only in ABE/GED programs operated by the school district. Other counties permit teens to choose which program they will attend.

LEAP has not led to major changes in the menu of education options available in the research counties or in school district policies that affect teen parents' access to these programs. However, the increasing use of JOBS funding to support ABE/GED programs has increased the ability of 16- to 17-year-olds to enroll in these programs in some areas, since JOBS funds are not subject to the same restrictions as state ABE funds.

3. The Role of GRADS. Linkages between LEAP and public school districts have been greatly aided by the presence of GRADS (Graduation, Reality and Dual-Role Skills), a preexisting Ohio Department of Education program that uses specially trained home economics teachers to provide instruction and services to pregnant and parenting students. GRADS, which has expanded since LEAP started, operated in 572 Ohio public schools, including from nine to 24 schools in each of the seven counties covered by this report, during the 1991-92 school year.[27] Because the GRADS and LEAP caseloads and missions overlap, staff in the two programs have established close relationships in many areas. GRADS teachers have often become informal liaisons between their schools and LEAP, and have worked with case managers to resolve problems affecting particular teens. In some districts, GRADS has become, in effect, an on-site extension of LEAP's case management efforts, and some LEAP supervisors, in turn, serve on GRADS advisory boards. In some instances, GRADS teachers have facilitated collaborative efforts between LEAP and school staff that far exceed the basic attendance reporting necessary to implement LEAP's financial incentives. As mentioned earlier, Lawrence County has contracted the LEAP case management function for high school students to the local GRADS program. It seems clear that LEAP staff would have had a much more difficult time establishing relationships with schools had GRADS not existed.[28]

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[27] During the 1989-90 school year, 454 schools had GRADS programs. In that year, GRADS was available in 57 percent of Ohio's city school districts.

III. Conclusions

LEAP has operated relatively smoothly during the period covered by this analysis, especially considering the complexity of the program design, the need for extensive inter-agency coordination, and the lack of previous models on which to build. While all of the research counties have experienced a range of problems, large numbers of teens have been identified and subjected to the program's incentives. Not surprisingly, the program functioned less efficiently during its first year of operations, but has improved steadily during the study period. However, the pace of progress has not always been even, as LEAP has been dramatically affected by a major computer system conversion and a sharp increase in the eligible caseload (caused by a change in the eligibility rules and better teen identification procedures).

The counties' experiences to date suggest several lessons for implementing programs of this type. First, without sophisticated computer capability, it is difficult both to identify eligible teenagers and to implement an incentive system that requires frequent grant changes. Second, the program's organizational structure strongly affects its performance. Specifically, if LEAP case managers are not responsible for grant adjustments, they are likely to have difficulty implementing this part of the program. In contrast, Income Maintenance workers, while more qualified to implement grant adjustments, may require additional training in order to provide proactive case management services, which appear to be a vital part of the model. Finally, it is challenging to develop and maintain linkages with schools, and county and school staff should expect to devote considerable time and energy to this issue. In addition, especially if the program does not provide primary services, it is critical for program staff to understand school policies and how they may affect the experiences of teens in the program.

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[28] LEAP's implementation has also been assisted by another Ohio Department of Education program, GOALS, which targets young parents who have dropped out. GOALS offers classes in personal development, career exploration, and parenting, usually linked with ABE/GED classes.

The county LEAP programs vary substantially, and it is difficult to link specific programmatic strategies with impact or process results because the counties differ in so many ways. Nevertheless, the wide variation across counties and the issues described in this chapter do provide some important suggestive data that can be helpful in interpreting the process and impact results. For example, it is clear that county organizational strategies can affect the implementation of the financial incentives, and that school and state/federal policies influence the range of education options available to teens. The relative inefficiency of early program operations, particularly in some counties, should also be kept in mind in interpreting the findings reported in later chapters.

CHAPTER 5

APPLICATION OF THE LEAP INCENTIVE STRUCTURE

This chapter presents an analysis of LEAP program operations that tracks the experiences of teens in the program group in the months following the initial determination of their eligibility for the program (which was also the point at which teens were randomly assigned to the program group or the control group). The objective is to determine the degree to which teens were exposed to LEAP's incentives – i.e., the frequency and patterns of bonuses and grant reductions. The analysis, which is limited to Ohio's three largest counties – Cuyahoga (Cleveland), Franklin (Columbus), and Hamilton (Cincinnati) – suggests how well counties have applied the incentives and also how real this structure has been for eligible teens. It also informs the findings on program impacts that are presented in Chapters 7 and 8 by assessing the relative intensity of the LEAP treatment over time and across these three key counties.

The chapter begins with a brief introductory section. Section II assesses the proportion of teens who were ever affected by the financial incentives during their first 6 and 18 months in LEAP, focusing on grant adjustment (i.e., bonus and sanction) requests by LEAP staff. The analysis determines whether these teens were more likely to be slated for bonuses or sanctions, and explores the patterns of requested grant adjustments over time. Section III examines the volume of bonuses and sanctions, and the disparity between requested and actual grant adjustments, in an effort to ascertain the intensity of the program treatment teens actually received. The final section, Section IV, looks at these same issues from the perspective of the counties rather than the teens. Thus, it assesses how aggregate bonus and sanction request rates have changed over time.

Overall, the analysis shows that most teens have been touched by LEAP's incentives at some point during their eligibility for LEAP. Although more teens earned bonuses than sanctions, the sanction request rate was much higher than the rates measured in evaluations of mandatory welfare-to-work programs for adults. However, many teens were not scheduled for large numbers of grant adjustments, and a substantial fraction of the adjustments that were requested never occurred during the early months of operations.

The results also show that grant adjustment request rates and patterns differed over time and across counties. Specifically, during the early months of operations, when LEAP functioned least efficiently, fewer teens were scheduled for grant adjustments than at a later point, and more were slated for bonuses than sanctions. Over time, the proportion scheduled for adjustments has grown, as has the sanction request rate. The county differences appear to have resulted from differences in teen behavior, county policies, and the efficiency of county operations.

I. Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, LEAP-eligible teens can receive two kinds of bonus payments:

- **Enrollment bonuses** are one-time payments made (1) when a teen verifies that she is enrolled in a school or education program, and (2) at the beginning of subsequent academic years as long as the teen remains enrolled.
- **Attendance bonuses** are earned for every month in which a teen meets LEAP's school attendance requirement (for high school students, two or fewer unexcused absences and four or fewer total absences); they are paid in the third month after the requirement is met.

Both types of bonuses amount to $62. Teens can also receive three types of sanctions, which reduce their family's monthly AFDC grant by $62:

- **Assessment sanctions** can be administered when a teen fails to come to (1) a scheduled assessment meeting (the event that commences LEAP participation), or (2) a scheduled reassessment meeting, which occurs prior to the start of subsequent school years. These sanctions remain in effect (and monthly grants continue to be reduced) until the teen appears for the meeting. Because, in some counties, eligibility for LEAP is verified at this meeting, these sanctions can be applied to teens before as well as after eligibility is confirmed.
- **Enrollment sanctions** reduce grants when a teen has been assessed and either (1) fails to enroll (or to verify enrollment) in a qualifying school or education program, or (2) drops out of school. Once again, the sanction remains in place until the teen provides proof of enrollment or becomes exempt from or ineligible for LEAP.
- **Attendance sanctions** are requested for each month in which an enrolled teen does not meet LEAP's school attendance requirement and does not have an acceptable reason for failing to do so. They are applied three months after the month in which the attendance was poor (e.g., poor attendance in October results in a grant reduction in January).

Based on the individual teen's compliance (or noncompliance) with these rules, LEAP staff issue a request that bonuses and sanctions be given.[1] These requests are acted upon by Income Maintenance (IM) staff who, in most counties, are different from LEAP staff.[2] Thus, as discussed in Chapter 4, a distinction must be drawn between *requested* bonuses and sanctions and *actual* bonuses and sanctions. This distinction is used throughout the analysis. Information on requests illustrates the responses of LEAP staff to teen behavior, while the actual bonuses and sanctions granted show the financial impact of LEAP on the teens.[3]

This analysis, which is based primarily on information collected from LEAP and AFDC casefiles, focuses on two groups of teens:

1. The full LEAP and AFDC casefile subsample (described in Chapter 2 and depicted in Figure 2.2), which is a randomly selected group of 388 program group teens. At least six months of follow-up data are available for all of these teens because random assignment ended in September 1991, and casefile data covered through April 1992 (see Appendix E for further discussion).

2. An early cohort of this group, consisting of 263 teens for whom at least 18 months of follow-up data are available (i.e., teens who were randomly assigned by the end of November 1990).

The chapter includes both a longitudinal analysis (Sections II and III), in which groups of teens are followed over time, and a point-in-time analysis (Section IV), which takes a "snapshot" of the entire eligible caseload during a specific month. The longitudinal analysis focuses briefly on the full LEAP and AFDC casefile subsample (in Section IIA), and then refers exclusively to the early cohort.

II. Overall Bonus and Sanction Rates

This section assesses the proportion of teens who ever earned grant adjustments during their time in LEAP, and explores whether teens were more likely to earn bonuses or be slated for sanctions. It focuses on sanction and bonus requests – rather than actual grant adjustments –

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[1] As noted in Chapter 1, teens who exceed the allowed number of total absences in a month, but not the allowed number of unexcused absences, receive neither a bonus nor a sanction for that month.

[2] Sanctions and bonuses are not requested by LEAP staff until after teens have been given seven days to provide evidence of good cause for their absences. However, once a sanction is requested, teens are given an additional 15 days to request a hearing. Thus, even if administrative problems never interfered with the imposition of requested sanctions, a small number of actions could be delayed or canceled by the hearing process.

[3] In discussing requested grant adjustments, this analysis generally uses the terms "earned," "slated," or "scheduled." The term "received" is generally used to describe actual adjustments.

because these measure intended program actions. In addition, with recent improvements in the ability of counties to process grant adjustments (see Chapter 4), the data on requests better describe how LEAP is likely to operate under steady-state conditions. (Section IIIB discusses the disparity between requested and actual actions during the study period.) Section IIA examines the first six months after eligibility determination, to determine how quickly the incentive system incorporated eligible teens. Sections IIB and C examine patterns of adjustment requests over a longer period of eligibility, 18 months.

A. Grant Adjustments During the First Six Months of Eligibility

Table 5.1 summarizes the program experience of the full LEAP and AFDC casefile subsample during the first six months after eligibility determination.[4] The results indicate that LEAP quickly incorporated most teens into its incentive structure. In the three counties sampled, 70.8 to 90.7 percent of all eligible teens were slated for at least one bonus or sanction within six months of eligibility determination.

More teens earned bonuses than were scheduled for sanctions. In the first six months, 61.9 to 69.5 percent of eligible teens earned one or more bonuses. The average number of months until the first enrollment bonus request was only 1.4 to 2.1 months. Moreover, 21.2 to 45.8 percent of teens qualified for at least one attendance bonus during their first six months – a large proportion, given the three-month lag between the month of good attendance and the corresponding bonus (attendance bonuses earned by teens who enrolled in the fourth, fifth, or sixth months after eligibility verification do not appear in the first six months of follow-up). Grant adjustment rates were lowest, and the time before the first bonus request was longest, in Franklin County. This is because of the eligibility verification procedures used in Franklin,[5] as well as the county's policy of contacting teens (often in their homes) before administering sanctions.

LEAP case managers also put sanctioning procedures into effect promptly. Although LEAP

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[4] As discussed in Chapter 2 and noted above, teens were randomly assigned to the program and control groups at the point of eligibility determination.

[5] Franklin County used a two-step process. Eligibility was always verified by telephone, and then teens had to come to the LEAP office for an assessment appointment at some later point. In the other two counties, verification and assessment often occurred simultaneously. Because enrollment bonuses cannot be awarded until an assessment has been done, the average time between eligibility verification and the first bonus was longer in Franklin. Cuyahoga County also used the phone method extensively, but not during the early months of operations.

TABLE 5.1

GRANT ADJUSTMENT REQUESTS FOR LEAP TEENS WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION (RANDOM ASSIGNMENT), BY COUNTY

Grant Adjustment Measure	Cuyahoga	Franklin	Hamilton
Ever any bonus or sanction request (%)	77.7	70.8	90.7
Bonus requests			
Ever any bonus request (%)	63.1	61.9	69.5
Ever an enrollment bonus request (%)	60.5	61.9	69.5
Average number of months from eligibility verification month to first enrollment bonus request, among those for whom an enrollment bonus was ever requested	1.4	2.1	1.4
Ever an attendance bonus request (%)	37.6	21.2	45.8
Sanction requests			
Ever any sanction request (%)	25.5	16.8	37.3
Ever an assessment sanction request (%)	12.1	7.1	11.9
Ever an enrollment sanction request (%)	11.5	3.5	22.0
Ever an attendance sanction request (%)	2.5	6.2	11.9
Exemptions			
Ever exempt (%)	26.8	20.4	24.6
Reason for exemption among those ever exempt (a) (%)			
Pregnant	50.0	65.2	34.5
Caring for a child under 3 months old	38.1	47.8	58.6
Lack of child care	35.7	8.7	3.4
Other reasons	9.5	8.7	24.1
Sample size	157	113	118

SOURCES: MDRC review of LEAP casefiles and AFDC casefiles for a subsample of program group members in the specified counties.

NOTE: (a) Percentages do not add to 100 because some teens had more than one type of exemption.

casefile reviews showed that many program staff gave teens "second chances" before requesting initial grant reductions, 16.8 to 37.3 percent of all teens earned at least one sanction within the first six months. As might be expected, most sanctions in these early months were for failure to attend assessment or failure to enroll in school rather than for poor attendance.

It is clear from the bottom section of the table that some teens did not earn grant adjustments because they were exempt for some or all of the six-month period. In fact, some teens were exempt at the point they became eligible for LEAP. The most common exemption reasons were pregnancy and care of a child under 3 months old.

B. Grant Adjustments During the First 18 Months of Eligibility

Table 5.2 displays bonus and sanction request rates by county during the first 18 months of eligibility for an early cohort (i.e., teens randomly assigned by the end of November 1990) of the LEAP and AFDC casefile subsample.[6] The table presents information in six-month segments as well as for the entire period in order to show the pattern of these requests over time.[7]

The top row of the table indicates the percentage of the sample that remained eligible for LEAP during each period. This percentage decreased over time, as teens aged out of LEAP, graduated from school, or left AFDC. Thus, after six months, 82.4 to 89.5 percent of the teens were still eligible. By the third period, months 13 to 18, the pool of eligible teens was reduced to 71.6 to 77.9 percent.[8]

Overall, the 18-month results show that more teens were brought into the incentive structure as time passed. As might be expected, most enrollment bonuses were requested during the early period, when the teens were new to LEAP. In the next two six-month periods, the proportion of teens who earned enrollment bonuses dropped dramatically, to levels ranging from 10.4 to 24.0 percent, because many teens had already enrolled by the end of the first period.

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[6] It is clear from the first column of each county panel that the early cohort looks very much like the full subsample (represented in Table 5.1) in terms of its experiences during the first six months of their eligibility for LEAP.

[7] Because all members of the early cohort entered LEAP near the beginning of program operations, the information presented in this table reflects two issues: (1) the patterns of adjustment requests during these particular teens' careers in LEAP, and (2) the patterns over the program's operational life.

[8] Hamilton County had the highest percentage remaining eligible. Hamilton's policy of in-office eligibility verification (with concurrent assessment) may partly account for the fact that fewer teens became ineligible. In Franklin and Cuyahoga counties some teens were randomly assigned after a telephone contact (see Chapter 2) but were later found to be ineligible.

TABLE 5.2

GRANT ADJUSTMENT REQUESTS FOR AN EARLY COHORT OF LEAP TEENS WITHIN 18 MONTHS OF ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION (RANDOM ASSIGNMENT), BY COUNTY AND TIME PERIOD

	Cuyahoga				Franklin				Hamilton			
	Months				Months				Months			
Grant Adjustment Measure	1-6	7-12	13-18	1-18	1-6	7-12	13-18	1-18	1-6	7-12	13-18	1-18
Ever eligible (%)	100.0	82.6	71.6	100.0	100.0	82.4	73.5	100.0	100.0	89.5	77.9	100.0
Ever any bonus or sanction request (%)	78.9	78.9	79.5	91.7	77.9	73.2	62.0	92.6	89.5	77.9	58.2	95.3
Bonus requests												
Ever any bonus request (%)	64.2	53.3	44.9	72.5	64.7	51.8	38.0	82.4	68.6	39.0	34.3	73.3
Ever an enrollment bonus request (%)	60.6	23.3	21.8	70.6	64.7	12.5	24.0	82.4	68.6	10.4	19.4	73.3
Ever an attendance bonus request (%)	41.3	45.6	34.6	56.0	20.6	42.9	26.0	45.6	46.5	35.1	26.9	59.3
Sanction requests												
Ever any sanction request (%)	22.9	38.9	44.9	49.5	23.5	46.4	36.0	55.9	37.2	53.2	28.4	64.0
Ever an assessment sanction request (%)	7.3	11.1	17.9	17.4	11.8	5.4	4.0	13.2	10.5	7.8	10.4	19.8
Ever an enrollment sanction request (%)	11.9	14.4	21.8	22.9	4.4	12.5	20.0	22.1	20.9	26.0	14.9	33.7
Ever an attendance sanction request (%)	3.7	14.4	12.8	16.5	7.4	32.1	14.0	35.3	14.0	29.9	4.5	33.7
Sample size	109	90	78	109	68	56	50	68	86	77	67	86

SOURCES: MDRC review of LEAP casefiles and AFDC casefiles for a subsample of program group members randomly assigned through November 1990 in the specified counties.

NOTE: Since not all teens were eligible in all three six-month periods, sample sizes vary among these periods. Each period's sample size is equal to the percentage of teens ever eligible in that period (e.g., Cuyahoga's sample size in months 7-12 is 90, or 82.6 percent of 109).

Attendance bonus request rates rose at first and then declined in months 13 to 18 in two of the three counties. The increase from the first to the second period in Cuyahoga and Franklin probably occurred because the lag between attendance and bonus pushed many early attendance bonuses into the second six-month period. The later decline may partly reflect improvement in school attendance reporting systems over time: As discussed in Chapter 4, reliable systems were not in place when LEAP began operations in 1989, and the program's policy is to grant the bonus if attendance data are not available. Also, the rate may have declined because some teens who enrolled in school began to attend poorly and eventually dropped out. This explanation is also suggested by the enrollment sanction request rates, which generally rose over time (as enrolled teens dropped out), and the attendance sanction request rates, which rose and then fell (i.e., teens first attended poorly and then left school).[9]

The sanction request rates were generally highest in Hamilton County and lowest in Cuyahoga County. Such county differences may be caused by a number of factors in addition to teen behavior. For example, staff in some counties have had more difficulty obtaining attendance data, and have been more apt to grant teens additional chances or exemptions when they failed to meet the program requirements.

C. A Summary of Bonus and Sanction Rates

Employing the same data used for Table 5.2, Figure 5.1 graphically illustrates the experiences of 100 typical LEAP teens in the three largest counties within 18 months of eligibility determination. As shown in the figure, 93 of the teens earned at least one bonus or sanction during this period. Thus, it is clear that the incentives have reached the vast majority of eligible teens.

It is also clear from Figure 5.1 that a greater proportion of teens have earned bonuses than sanctions. As the figure shows, 37 teens earned only bonuses during the follow-up period, while 18 earned only sanction referrals. The largest group, including 38 teens, earned at least one of each type of adjustment. Of these 38, 18 earned more sanctions than bonuses, 14 earned more bonuses than sanctions, and 6 earned the same number of each. Overall, 75 teens earned at least one bonus and 56 earned at least one sanction.

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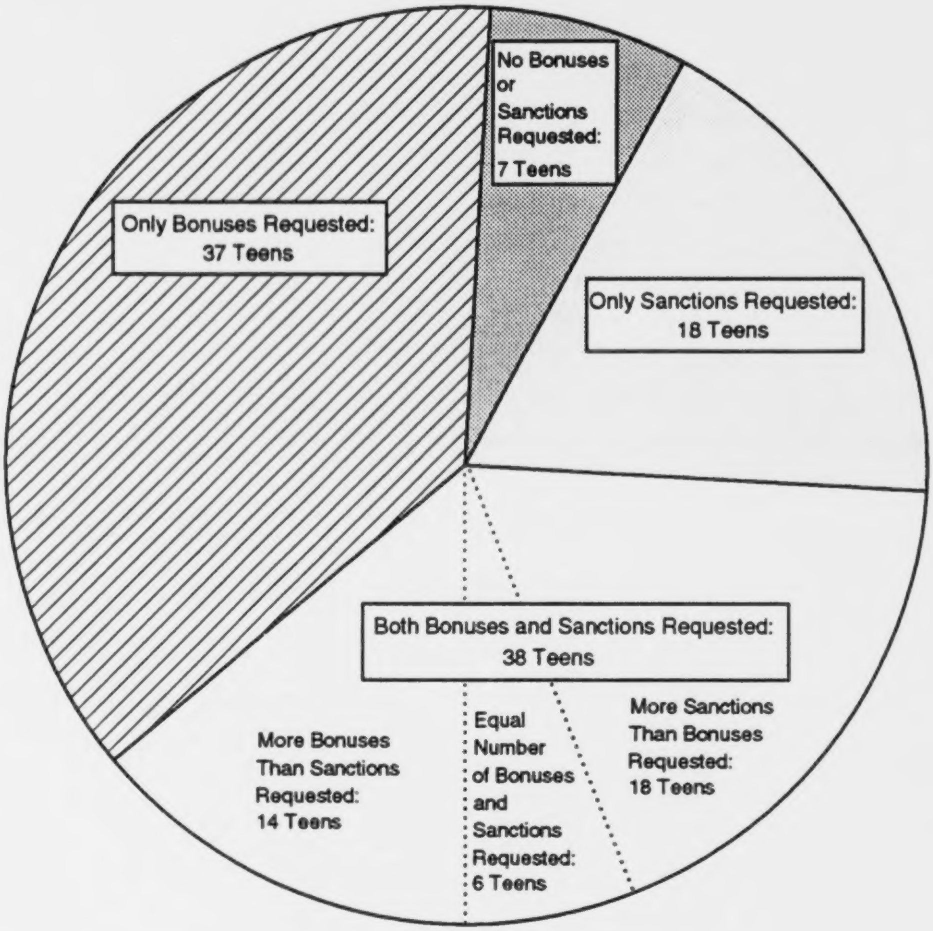
[9] Attendance sanctions are meant to imply that the teen is enrolled in school but attending poorly, and enrollment sanctions should be requested for teens who fail to enroll or who enroll and later drop out. In fact, some attendance sanctions were probably requested for teens who had dropped out of school, but were still considered to be officially enrolled for a few additional months.

FIGURE 5.1

GRANT ADJUSTMENT REQUESTS FOR 100 TYPICAL LEAP TEENS WITHIN 18 MONTHS OF ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION (RANDOM ASSIGNMENT)



SOURCES: MDRC review of LEAP casefiles and AFDC casefiles for a random subsample of 263 program group members in Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties.

NOTE: Numbers are weighted averages reflecting the number of teens in the three counties who were randomly assigned through November 1990.

Among teens who earned both bonuses and sanctions, it is critical to understand the order in which these actions were requested. Some of the 38 teens initially earned sanctions for failing to come to assessment, but then complied with the program. Others were slated for sanctions for failing to enroll in school, but later fulfilled this obligation. Such "turnarounds" clearly suggest a positive response to LEAP. However, a greater number of these teens followed a less cooperative pattern: They earned an initial enrollment bonus, but were later sanctioned for poor attendance or because they dropped out of school. The preponderance of these negative patterns may help explain why these teens were more likely to earn more sanctions than bonuses.

Overall, although more teens earned at least one bonus than at least one sanction, LEAP's rate of requested sanctions has been much higher than the rates measured in previous evaluations of welfare-to-work programs for adults. In many ways, this is not surprising because LEAP differs from those earlier programs in several respects, most notably in the kind and length of activity that are required and the way in which compliance is monitored and sanctions are issued. In the Teenage Parent Demonstration, whose target population is similar to LEAP's, more than 40 percent of teens were sanctioned.[10] In addition, as noted above, two-thirds of the teens who earned sanctions also earned at least one bonus, and one-fourth of them earned more bonuses than sanctions. Finally, as will be discussed below, most of the teens who earned sanctions did not earn large numbers of sanctions, and many of the requested sanctions were never delivered.

III. The Intensity of the Financial Incentive Treatment

The overall grant adjustment rates examined in the previous section only partly describe the intensity of the financial treatment experienced by teens. Three other considerations are also important to the grant adjustment story:

- The volume of sanctions and bonuses requested.
- The proportion of requested adjustments that were actually processed.
- The additional sanctions administered prior to eligibility verification.

In addition, it is important to recognize that the bonus/sanction story differs among different groups of LEAP teens. This variation is also discussed in this section.

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[10] See Bloomenthal, Leubuscher, and Maynard, 1992.

A. The Volume of Bonuses and Sanctions

Figure 5.2 displays the total number of bonuses and sanctions earned by LEAP teens within 18 months of eligibility determination. It shows that, while the vast majority of teens earned at least one adjustment, the proportion of LEAP teens who incurred *many* sanctions or bonuses within this 18-month period was, not surprisingly, much smaller. While at least one bonus or sanction request was made for 93.2 percent of teens, 68.1 percent earned four or more grant adjustments and 51.7 percent were scheduled for six or more adjustments. Staff requested an average of 3.5 bonuses and 2.8 sanctions per teen during the period; bonus requests exceeded sanction requests by about 25 percent.

Because many teens earned only a few grant adjustments, the fraction of teens who were slated for adjustments in any given month was much lower than the proportion who were ever scheduled for an adjustment over the course of the 18-month period. This is illustrated in Table 5.3, which shows that, while the percentage of teens who *ever* earned at least one sanction request during the full 18-month period ranged from 49.5 to 64.0 percent, the percentage of teens for whom a sanction was requested *in any given month* (indicated by the Monthly Sanction Request Rate) was 16.5 to 25.5 percent. Similarly, the percentage of teens who ever earned a bonus request was very high – 72.5 to 82.4 percent – while the monthly percentage of teens with a bonus request ranged from 21.5 to 32.5 percent.

Overall, in the three counties, teens earned bonuses in 27 percent of their eligible months and earned sanction requests in 22 percent of the months, leaving just over half of the eligible months with neither bonus nor sanction requests (these numbers are not shown in the table). Although this may imply that LEAP staff were not tracking teens closely, several factors contributed to the absence of bonus or sanction requests in these months. These include:

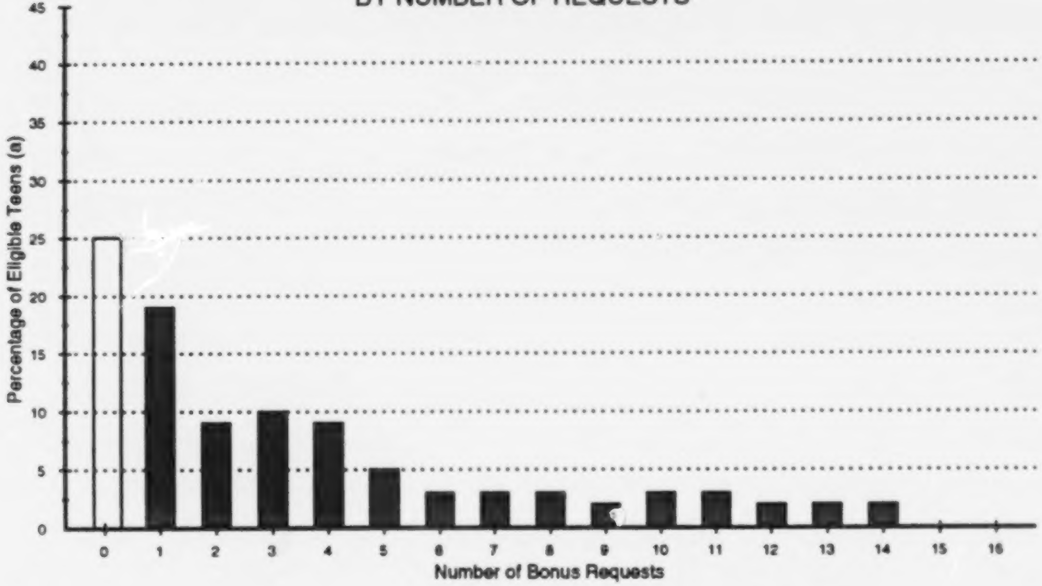
- **Attendance rules.** Because LEAP's incentive system has three tiers, enrolled teens may legitimately earn neither a bonus nor a sanction if they have two or fewer unexcused absences but more than four total absences in a month.

- **Exemptions.** More than one-third of all LEAP teens were eligible but exempt (and therefore not getting sanctions) at some point while in the LEAP program. Some teens were exempt for long periods, especially those with more than one kind of exemption.

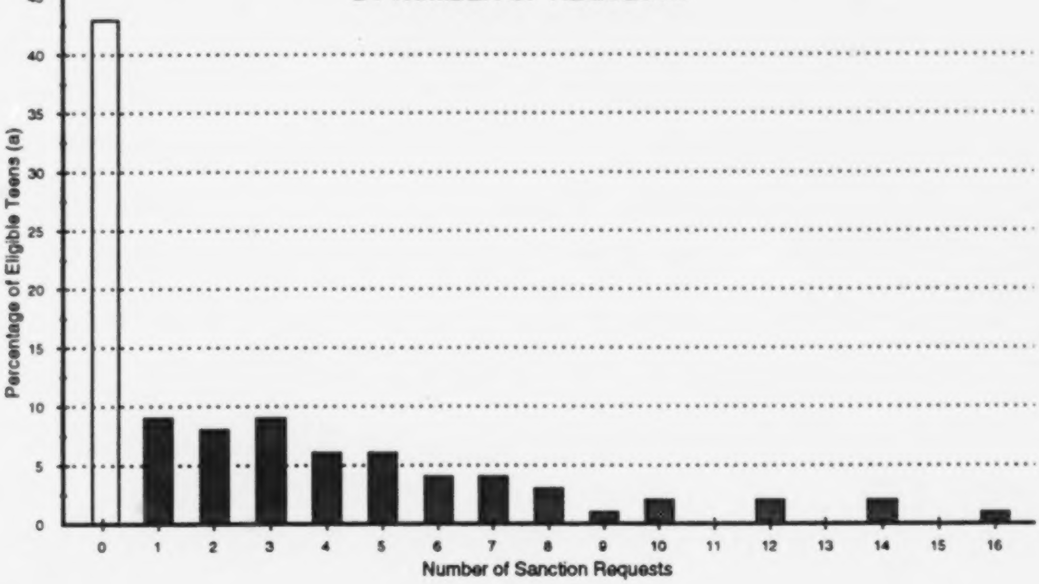
- **Summer months.** Most regular high schools are not in session during the summer. Thus, teens usually cannot be scheduled to receive bonuses in October and November (for July and August attendance), even though they have remained

FIGURE 5.2

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF BONUS REQUESTS PER LEAP TEEN WITHIN 18 MONTHS OF ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION (RANDOM ASSIGNMENT), BY NUMBER OF REQUESTS



PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SANCTION REQUESTS PER LEAP TEEN WITHIN 18 MONTHS OF ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION (RANDOM ASSIGNMENT), BY NUMBER OF REQUESTS



SOURCES: MDRC review of LEAP casefiles and AFDC casefiles for a subsample of program group members in Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties.

NOTE: (a) The percentages reflect the unweighted total number of teens in the three counties who were randomly assigned through November 1990.

TABLE 5.3

REQUESTED AND ACTUAL GRANT ADJUSTMENTS FOR AN EARLY COHORT OF LEAP TEENS WITHIN 18 MONTHS OF ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION (RANDOM ASSIGNMENT), BY COUNTY AND TIME PERIOD

	Cuyahoga				Franklin				Hamilton			
	Months				Months				Months			
Grant Adjustment Measure	1-6	7-12	13-18	1-18	1-6	7-12	13-18	1-18	1-6	7-12	13-18	1-18
Ever eligible (%)	100.0	82.6	71.6	100.0	100.0	82.4	73.5	100.0	100.0	89.5	77.9	100.0
Average number of months eligible (a)	5.5	4.7	5.0	13.4	5.8	4.6	5.0	13.8	5.7	5.0	5.0	14.2
Bonus requests												
Ever any bonus request (%)	64.2	53.3	44.9	72.5	64.7	51.8	38.0	82.4	68.6	39.0	34.3	73.3
Monthly bonus request rate (b) (%)	28.1	43.7	26.6	32.5	16.8	29.0	20.3	21.5	27.0	26.4	22.9	25.7
Actual bonuses												
Ever received a bonus (c) (%)	43.9	48.8	31.9	60.2	64.7	51.8	38.0	82.4	67.9	46.2	20.0	67.9
Monthly bonus rate (b, c) (%)	18.6	38.4	23.0	26.1	16.8	29.0	20.3	21.5	21.9	30.1	11.5	21.2
Sanction requests												
Ever any sanction request (%)	22.9	38.9	44.9	49.5	23.5	46.4	36.0	55.9	37.2	53.2	28.4	64.0
Monthly sanction request rate (b) (%)	8.6	30.3	33.8	22.1	6.0	29.7	17.9	16.5	16.8	37.0	26.1	25.5
Actual sanctions												
Ever sanctioned (c) (%)	6.1	18.8	29.0	24.5	23.5	46.4	36.0	55.9	25.0	42.3	40.0	57.1
Monthly sanction rate (b, c) (%)	2.2	15.0	15.6	9.9	6.0	29.7	17.9	16.5	11.6	32.7	34.5	25.0
Sample size	109	90	78	109	68	56	50	68	86	77	67	86

(continued)

TABLE 5.3 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC review of LEAP casefiles and AFDC casefiles for a subsample of program group members randomly assigned through November 1990 in the specified counties.

NOTES: Since not all teens were eligible in all three six–month periods, sample sizes vary among these periods. Each period's sample size is equal to the percentage of teens ever eligible in that period (e.g., Cuyahoga's sample size in months 7–12 is 90, or 82.6 percent of 109).

(a) Includes months when teens were exempt or in a pending status.

(b) Rates are calculated as the number of specified program actions in the period divided by the total number of eligible months for all eligible teens in that period. Months with missing data are excluded. For example, in Cuyahoga, for months 1–6, the monthly bonus request rate is calculated to be 28.1 percent: 160 bonus requests divided by 570 (i.e., the 595 eligible months minus the 25 months for which data are missing).

(c) This item is from AFDC casefiles and was collected for only part of the Cuyahoga sample (N = 98) and part of the Hamilton sample (N = 28).

cooperative with LEAP. (September's attendance will trigger a bonus for December.)

- **Procedural matters.** A variety of specific rules and implementation practices could result in a teen's earning neither a bonus nor a sanction for a particular month. For example, teens who failed to come to their assessment or failed to enroll in school were often given "another chance."[11] Also, because of the bonus payment and grant reduction lags, some earned bonuses or sanctions were not recorded within the follow-up period. Finally, teens were sometimes placed in a "pending" status while child care arrangements were being established, or while they waited for an education program to begin.[12]

- **Welfare eligibility.** This has played a role, in combination with the grant adjustment lag, in limiting bonus and sanction requests. For example, a teen who was randomly assigned in October 1989 and left welfare in January 1991 could earn a maximum of 12 bonuses in 16 months. In other words, the teen could not earn a bonus in 25 percent of her eligible months.[13]

- **GED testing.** Teens are not expected to attend ABE/GED classes during the time they are taking GED tests or waiting for the results of those tests.

Thus, for example, a teen who is exempt for several months, attends a regular high school that is not in session in the summer months, and has several months with large numbers of excused absences might only earn bonuses or sanctions in half or less of her eligible months.

B. Actual Versus Requested Bonuses and Sanctions

As described in Chapter 4, in most counties (including Hamilton and Cuyahoga) LEAP case managers are not directly responsible for processing grant adjustments. Prior to the implementation of the CRIS-E system, it was necessary for case managers to notify Income Maintenance staff via paper forms when adjustments were required. This paper-based system was subject to error and delay, especially in large counties, where LEAP cases may be dispersed among hundreds of Income Maintenance workers. Table 5.3 illustrates the divergence between requested and actual bonuses and

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[11] As indicated earlier, program rules give teens two chances to attend a scheduled assessment meeting before they are subject to a sanction. However, LEAP staff in some counties gave teens additional opportunities to meet these requirements before requesting sanctions.

[12] Teens were especially likely to be placed in this status if they entered LEAP near the end of a school year and were not enrolled in school. In these situations, it may have been too late in practical terms for the teen to reenroll until the following September.

[13] Grant adjustments that are supposed to occur three months after the behavior that triggers them can only be carried out if the welfare case is still open – i.e., if there is a welfare grant to adjust.

sanctions. Clearly, there were substantial differences across the three counties. In Hamilton County, the actual bonus and sanction rates were not much lower than the requested rates. Bonuses were paid to 21.2 percent of eligible teens in a given month compared to the request rate of 25.7 percent; for sanctions, the actual sanction rate of 25.0 percent was only slightly lower than the 25.5 percent request rate.[14] In Cuyahoga County, the monthly bonus request and actual bonus rates were relatively close (32.5 versus 26.1 percent), but the difference was more pronounced for the sanction request and actual sanction rates (22.1 percent versus 9.9 percent). In other words, during the 18-month period, only about half the sanction requests were actually implemented in this county. However, from examining the six-month segments, it is clear that the proportion of requests that eventuated in actual grant adjustments was lowest during the early months, and higher in later periods as the county developed new procedures to identify and follow up on missed requests.[15] In the first period, only about one-fourth of the sanction requests were processed. In contrast, in the final period, about two-thirds of the teens who should have been sanctioned received at least one sanction (although some obviously received too few). Franklin's rates were the same for requested and actual bonuses and sanctions because LEAP case managers are directly responsible for processing adjustments (i.e., there are no "requests").

Table 5.4 addresses this issue in another way by examining the responses of program group members in each of the seven Tier 1 counties to a survey question that asked whether teens had been sanctioned or received bonuses based on their school attendance. Although these figures cannot be directly compared with the numbers presented elsewhere in this chapter (because they are self-reported and cover a different time period), they are useful in illustrating how the three counties analyzed here fit in with the others. The figures suggest that Franklin and Hamilton counties had among the highest actual sanction rates, while Cuyahoga County's rate was relatively low. These figures are proportional to the actual sanction rates in Table 5.3 (i.e., the "ever sanctioned" rates for Hamilton and Franklin were similar, and more than twice as high as the Cuyahoga rate). Cuyahoga's relatively low rate was probably due primarily to the large disparity between requested and actual adjustments.

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[14] This result is somewhat surprising because staff in Hamilton County reported that there were serious difficulties in processing requested sanctions during the early period.

[15] In some counties, delays in acting on bonus requests resulted in teens filing for fair hearings, which helped spur improvement in county procedures.

TABLE 5.4

SELF-REPORTED SANCTION AND BONUS RATES FOR LEAP PROGRAM GROUP SURVEY RESPONDENTS, BY COUNTY

Grant Adjustment Measure	Cuyahoga (%)	Franklin (%)	Hamilton (%)	Lawrence (%)	Lucas (%)	Muskingum (%)	Stark (%)	All Tier 1 Counties (%)
Ever sanctioned	18.3	38.1	34.1	30.8	14.3	30.8	31.7	26.0
Ever received a bonus	43.5	48.7	49.2	76.9	38.1	69.2	58.5	47.1
Sample size	230	113	126	13	84	13	41	620

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data for survey respondents with at least 12 months of post-random assignment follow-up available.

NOTE: Rates in this table refer to any sanctions or bonuses administered from the date of random assignment to the date of the survey.

C. Subgroup Results

As might be expected, the typical patterns of bonuses and sanctions differed for key subgroups of the LEAP population. The early cohort of the LEAP and AFDC casefile subsample, although consisting of only about 260 cases, allows these differences to be identified; the sample is too small, however, to permit comparisons of these differences across counties. For example, an analysis (not shown in tables) found that teens who reported being enrolled in school at random assignment were most likely to earn both enrollment and attendance bonuses with no sanctions during the follow-up period, a pattern that suggests relatively strong compliance; 36.7 percent of the teens in this subgroup fell into this category. In contrast, teens who were out of school at random assignment were much less likely to exhibit this level of cooperation. Among teens out of school less than 12 months, 21.9 percent fell into this category; the figure was only 19.1 percent for those out more than 12 months.

Younger teens, who were more likely to be enrolled in school at random assignment, had the highest bonus request rates: 91.3 percent of teens between the ages of 12 and 15 earned an enrollment bonus, and 78.3 percent earned at least one attendance bonus. For the 16- to 17-year-old age group (about half of all teens in the early cohort), the enrollment and attendance bonus request rates were 83.7 percent and 60.5 percent, respectively. Older teens (18 to 19 years old), who were most likely to be out of school when entering LEAP, had the lowest bonus request rates. Still, more than half (60.4 percent) of these teens earned an enrollment bonus, and 42.3 percent were slated for at least one attendance bonus.

The likelihood that teens earned at least one sanction did not vary according to age. At least one sanction was earned by 55 to 57 percent of teens in each of the three age groups. However, age is a factor when the number of sanctions is considered. Teens who earned four or more sanctions and no bonuses were concentrated in the 18- to 19-year-old group; 21 percent of teens in this group were scheduled for four or more sanctions. In contrast, only 9 percent of 16- to 17-year-olds in the casefile subsample, and no 12- to 15-year-olds, earned this many sanctions.

Overall, approximately 13 percent of the casefile subsample's early cohort was slated for four or more sanctions and no bonuses during the 18-month period. A breakdown of this group by school enrollment status at random assignment reveals that more than two-thirds of them had been out of school 12 months or more. This is a source of major concern, since many of these teens appear to have incurred large and sustained grant reductions.

Only a small group of teens, 8 percent, responded to LEAP by earning an enrollment bonus but then earned no other bonuses or sanctions for the remainder of their eligible months. Interestingly, teens who were not enrolled in school at random assignment were no more likely than enrolled teens to earn only an enrollment bonus.

D. A Note on Sanctions Prior to Eligibility Verification

Teens identified as potentially LEAP-eligible are required to cooperate with program efforts to verify their eligibility and are subject to being sanctioned if they do not cooperate. Thus, if eligibility verification occurs at assessment[16] (a meeting that is scheduled to take place at the LEAP office), it is quite possible that teens could be sanctioned for failure to come to the assessment.

This means that, for two reasons, the results presented in Tables 5.1 through 5.3 do not tell the entire story on sanctioning in LEAP.[17] First, the results cover only teens whose eligibility was confirmed (and who consequently were randomly assigned to the program or control group) and therefore exclude sanctions of teens who did not cooperate with eligibility-verification procedures (and hence were not randomly assigned). In Cuyahoga County, the number of teens in this category was quite large – amounting to approximately 20 percent of those whose eligibility *was* verified. In other words, for every 100 eligible teens reported in Table 5.2, there were another 20 teens in Cuyahoga who were presumed eligible and for whom sanctions were requested. In Hamilton County, the number of requests for sanctions for presumed-eligible teens represented roughly 10 percent of eligible teens. Franklin County, as noted earlier, did not sanction teens prior to confirming their eligibility.

Second, sanctioning that occurred prior to eligibility verification for teens who eventually *did* cooperate with the program's efforts to confirm their eligibility is also not reflected in Tables 5.1 through 5.3. Of the full subsample of nearly 400 teens included in this chapter's analysis (i.e., the LEAP and AFDC casefile subsample), 5 percent were sanctioned prior to eligibility verification. The county rates were 4 percent in Cuyahoga, 9 percent in Hamilton, and zero in Franklin (owing to the county's intake process, described earlier). For the purpose of estimating an overall LEAP sanction rate, the sanctions for teens who were *presumed* to be eligible can be included as well as those for teens who were actually verified as eligible. Teens can be considered "presumed eligible" if they failed to cooperate with county efforts to determine their eligibility for a long enough period that the county considered them subject to a sanction – indicated by a request for a sanction. (It should be reiterated, however, that some teens who were presumed to be eligible turned out not to be eligible.) In Cuyahoga, including these sanction requests produces an overall sanction request rate (i.e., the percentage of teens for whom at least one sanction was requested) of 59 percent, compared to the 49.5 percent rate in Table 5.2. In Hamilton County, the overall sanction request rate was 69 percent, somewhat higher than the 64.0 percent rate in Table 5.2. In Franklin County, the overall sanction request rate was equal to that for confirmed eligibles – namely, 55.9 percent.

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[16] This occurs when counties do not verify eligibility using the telephone method, described in Chapter 2, but insist that teens appear at the LEAP office for assessment. However, it also occurs when the telephone method is used and county staff are unable to reach a teen by phone, necessitating a letter instructing the teen to come into the office for assessment.

[17] The tables *do* tell the entire story on bonuses because teens' eligibility had to be confirmed in order for them to earn bonuses.

IV. Program Changes over Time

A second type of analysis examines the extent to which LEAP staff applied the incentive structure to the LEAP population as the program matured over time. To address this question, point-in-time bonus request and sanction request rates were calculated for three different months during the two and a half years covered by the analysis. These rates include all members of the LEAP casefile subsample of 388 teens who were eligible for LEAP in the specified months. These point-in-time measures are "snapshots" of the proportion of teens eligible for LEAP in a particular month who were slated for bonuses, sanctions, both, or neither during that month.[18] Figures 5.3 and 5.4 present point-in-time data[19] for January 1990, January 1991, and January 1992.[20]

In addition to reflecting changes in implementation practices, the differences in point-in-time bonus request and sanction request rates shown in Figures 5.3 and 5.4 reflect changes in the LEAP-eligible population over time. In January 1990, most eligible teens were new to LEAP, since program

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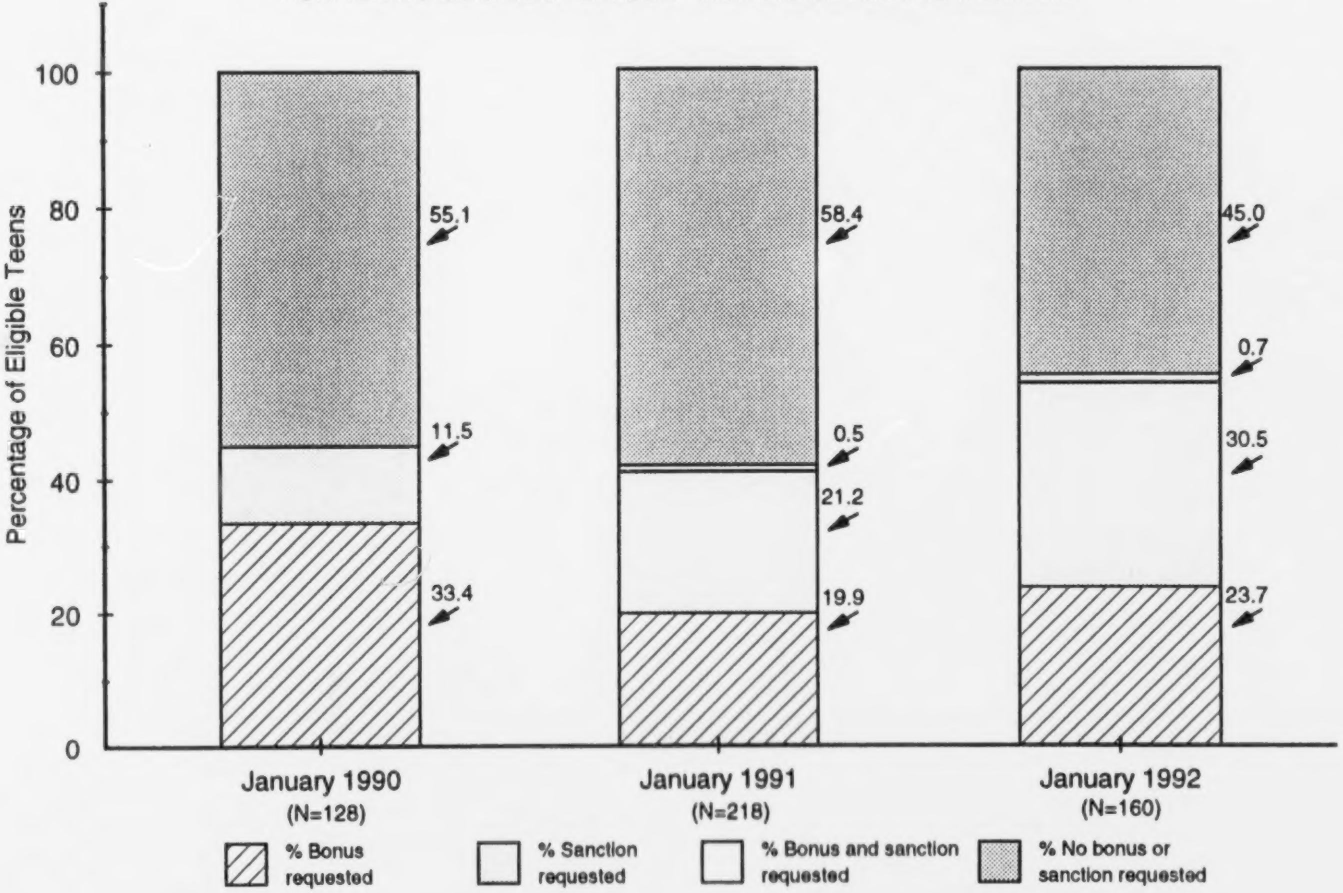
[18] The concept of examining bonus request and sanction request rates on a point-in-time basis (usually monthly) is familiar to program staff. Such information informs them about the teens' level of cooperation with the program and, on average, the frequency with which grants are being supplemented or reduced. These measures also indicate how the LEAP incentive structure is being operated at different points in time, which is the focus of this section of the chapter. It is to be expected that, early in the program, this structure may not have been fully implemented and/or teens may have taken a long time to respond to the incentives.

[19] The rates reported in these two figures include sanctioning that occurred prior to eligibility verification for teens whose eligibility was later verified.

[20] January was chosen as a "typical" program month because teens who enrolled in school in the summer or early fall would have had time to earn a bonus or incur a sanction. A teen who enrolled in September and had good attendance in October would earn a bonus effective in January; poor attendance in October without a satisfactory reason or exemption would incur a sanction in January.

FIGURE 5.3

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GRANT ADJUSTMENT REQUESTS FOR TEENS ELIGIBLE FOR LEAP DURING SELECTED MONTHS

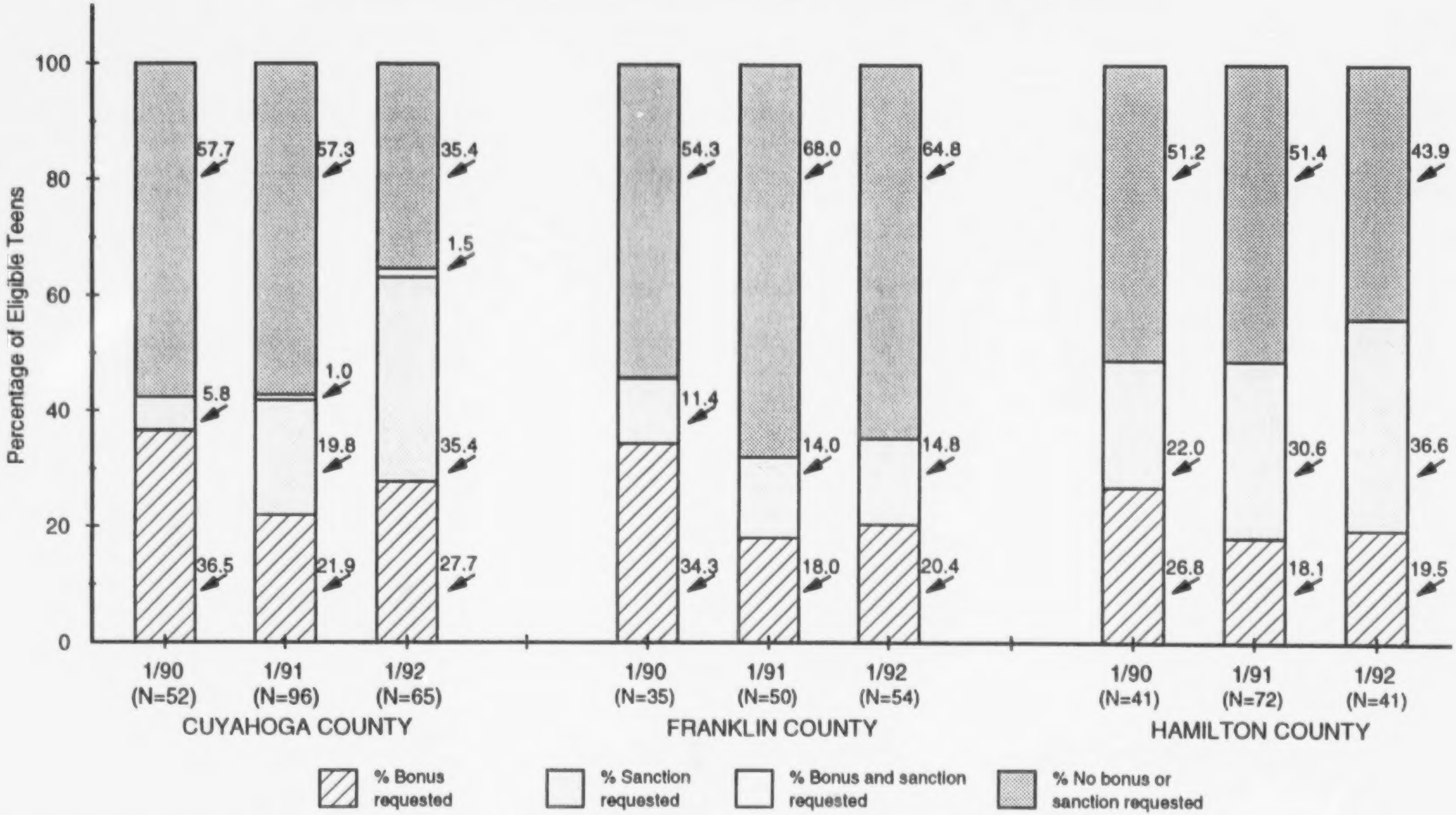


SOURCES: MDRC review of LEAP casefiles and AFDC casefiles for a subsample of program group members in Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties.

NOTE: Bonus and sanction rates are weighted to reflect the sizes of the full research samples in Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties. Also, since not all of the 388 teens in the LEAP and AFDC casefile subsamplewere eligible in all three of these months, the sample sizes shown vary and do not add to 388.

FIGURE 5.4

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GRANT ADJUSTMENT REQUESTS FOR TEENS ELIGIBLE FOR LEAP DURING SELECTED MONTHS, BY COUNTY



SOURCES: MDRC review of LEAP casefiles and AFDC casefiles for a subsample of program group members in the specified counties.

NOTE: Since not all of the teens in the LEAP and AFDC casefile subsample were eligible in all three of the months depicted, the sample sizes shown vary and do not add to the full county samples: Cuyahoga, 157; Franklin, 113; Hamilton, 118.

operations began in July 1989. By January 1991, some teens were new to the program but others had been in LEAP for more than a year. Finally, in January 1992, teens were no longer being randomly assigned to the LEAP evaluation, so most eligible teens in this month had been in LEAP for a long enough period to establish a pattern of bonuses and sanctions.[21]

Figure 5.3 presents combined bonus and sanction request rates for the three counties studied in this chapter, while Figure 5.4 presents county-specific rates. Although the pattern is not consistent, the general trend over time is toward: (1) lower bonus request rates, (2) higher sanction request rates, and (3) a smaller fraction of teens with neither type of request. Thus, Figure 5.4 indicates that each county recorded the lowest sanction request rate in January 1990 and the highest rate in January 1992. This was owing to several factors. First, random assignment began in July 1989, so in January 1990 many teens had just entered the program and therefore could not yet have incurred sanctions. Second, some teens were given a "second chance" before an assessment or enrollment sanction was requested. Third, the LEAP program was new, and reliable attendance reporting systems were not yet in place. Hence, attendance sanctions could not be requested (and attendance bonuses had to be scheduled) in cases where poor attendance could not be identified.[22] These factors may also explain why each county recorded its highest bonus request rate in January 1990: All eligible teens in that month had joined LEAP within the prior six months and, as noted earlier, more than 60 percent of all teens earned an enrollment bonus during the six months following eligibility determination. In addition, many teens earned presumptive bonuses in these early months because attendance data were not available.

Over the three years, across all three counties, the percentages of teens who were not scheduled for either a bonus or a sanction ranged from a high of 68 percent in Franklin in January 1991 to a low of 35.4 percent in Cuyahoga in January 1992. As noted above, there were several legitimate reasons why neither sanctions nor bonuses were requested for some teens in a particular month. However, overall, it seems clear that the program is operating more efficiently when more teens are slated for adjustments. Thus, it is not surprising that the fraction of teens earning neither adjustment was smaller in January 1992 than in January 1991 in all three counties.

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[21] This also means that the casefile sample used to calculate the figures for January 1992 did not reflect the entire eligible teen population in that month. That is, teens entering LEAP in October 1991 (after random assignment ended) through January 1992 were not included.

[22] The increasing sanction rate over time may also be attributable in part to an "accumulation" of noncompliant teens in the LEAP caseload as compliant teens graduated (or earned GEDs) and left the program.

V. Conclusions

Data from the three largest counties in Ohio indicate that most LEAP teens have been incorporated into the program's incentive structure. Although there was variation across counties and over time, the general pattern of bonus and sanction requests had three noteworthy features: (1) The number of bonus requests exceeded the number of sanction requests; (2) for several legitimate reasons, these requests were made in only about half of the months in which teens were eligible for LEAP; and (3) sanction request rates were higher than those measured for mandatory-participation programs for adults. Some requests for bonuses and sanctions were not acted upon, although this problem was concentrated in Cuyahoga County, and was most apparent during the first year of operations.

CHAPTER 6

THE TEENS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEAP

This chapter examines the LEAP policies and practices described in the previous two chapters from the perspective of teens who were eligible for the program. Survey data are used to describe how teens view LEAP in general, how the financial incentives have affected them, and how they describe their experiences with LEAP support services and case management. Information from the focus group discussions is used to flesh out the survey results in some cases. This chapter is designed as a bridge between the earlier data on LEAP's actions and the later information on the results of these actions.

I. General Attitudes

This section describes how teens view LEAP overall and examines how well they understand the program.

A. The Fairness of LEAP

Table 6.1 presents the responses of teens in both research groups to a survey question about the fairness of LEAP.[1] As shown in the table, about half the teens in both groups said they thought LEAP was fair, and about a third thought it was unfair. Although the difference is not statistically significant, teens in the program group were somewhat more likely to view LEAP as unfair. This is due in large part to the fact that teens who reported that they had been sanctioned by LEAP (all of whom are in the program group) were much more likely to view the program as unfair. There are few large differences in this figure across counties although a greater fraction of teens in rural counties tended to view LEAP as fair. Interestingly, perceptions of the fairness of LEAP did not differ substantially based on teens' school enrollment status at the point of random assignment (not shown).

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[1] The question was: "Some welfare agencies require teenage parents on welfare to go to school if they don't have a high school diploma or GED. These agencies can increase or decrease people's welfare checks because of their school attendance. Do you think this is fair or unfair?" The question is phrased in the abstract, without mentioning LEAP by name, because it was asked of both program groups members, who were in LEAP, and control groups members, who may not have been familiar with the program.

TABLE 6.1

PERCEPTIONS OF THE FAIRNESS OF LEAP

	Program Group			
Perception	Ever Sanctioned (%)	Never Sanctioned (%)	All (%)	Control Group (%)
LEAP is fair.	39.8	51.7	49.1	52.1
LEAP is unfair.	42.9	32.1	34.3	31.3
LEAP is sometimes fair, sometimes unfair.	17.3	16.2	16.5	16.0
Sample size	226	820	1,051	1,038

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for all survey sample members.

The "ever sanctioned" and "never sanctioned" categories are based on self-reports. The sample sizes for these categories do not sum to the program group sample size owing to missing data.

Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of items missing from some sample members' surveys.

Most teens who attended the focus groups expressed positive views about LEAP's general goals and about the program's approach, and almost all thought the program was implemented fairly. One teen said that LEAP was a "privilege" because young parents who are not receiving AFDC cannot get bonuses for attending school. Another said that the program "challenges" teens to take steps to improve their lives.

Most of the negative comments about LEAP were made in the Cleveland sessions, which had been purposely organized to include a large proportion of teens who had been sanctioned by LEAP. Here, teens tended to be much more ambivalent about the program. Several of these participants said that, while they agreed with LEAP's goals and liked the bonuses, support services, and assistance from staff, they felt that the sanctions were unfair because they removed badly needed income from poor households. As one teen put it:

> I don't think that they should be able to take money from you . . . That money is needed for a lot of other things. I heard that the money was given to you more or less to take care of your child, and I don't think they should take it away from you. You can barely live off of it [the normal grant] . . . Shoot, my rent is $250.

Some Cleveland focus group teens thought that participation in LEAP should be voluntary. Others objected to the notion that, in order to comply with LEAP, mothers must sometimes leave their children with strangers (i.e., child care providers). One teen said that LEAP is a good idea for some people, but not for people who "care about their kids and where they go." However, some of these same teens admitted that, without the possibility of a sanction, they might not have responded to the program.

Despite their general approval of the program model, many of the focus group teens had specific complaints about their experiences in LEAP. The most frequent grievances had to do with delays in receiving assistance they had been promised, such as bonuses and transportation assistance. One Columbus teen said that the bonus "only comes when it wants to come." Teens in all three counties said that, when transportation checks arrived late, they could not afford bus fare and thus could not attend school. It seemed clear that some of these teens saw LEAP as undependable, and this soured their overall opinions about the program to some extent, even though they supported its goals. Many of the participants, particularly those who did not have close relationships with their case managers, reported behaving passively with respect to LEAP, and did not take action to inform LEAP staff or resolve such problems when they emerged.

B. Level of Understanding

The survey results show that the vast majority of teens in the research sample have been informed about LEAP. Among program group teens who headed their own AFDC case when surveyed, about 80 percent said they had been told that their welfare grants could be increased or decreased based on their school attendance. This percentage was lowest in Cuyahoga County, where just under 70 percent of respondents said they had been informed, and highest in Franklin and Muskingum counties, where the figure was approximately 90 percent. Some of the teens who said they had not been told about LEAP may have had very limited contact with the program (e.g., they may have passed the GED exam or left welfare soon after entering the program, or never attended assessment); some may not have understood the program rules.

Almost all of the focus group participants understood the basic elements of the LEAP model, and a few had extremely detailed knowledge of the program rules, including the schedule for bonuses and sanctions. However, many of the participants were confused about various aspects of the program, and answered questions about LEAP policies incorrectly. For example, some misunderstood the specifics of the complex attendance policy (e.g., several did not understand the different allowances for unexcused and excused absences), and several thought they were "out" of LEAP when they stopped going to school. Others thought that teens could opt out of LEAP voluntarily. Some of this confusion may have contributed to the complaints described in the previous section.

II. Experiences with the Financial Incentives

The survey asked program group teens a series of questions about their experiences with LEAP sanctions and bonuses. Teens were asked to separately discuss sanctions and bonuses that occurred while they were receiving assistance on someone else's case and when they were case heads. The responses to these questions are summarized in Table 6.2.

As the table shows, most teens who had received bonuses or sanctions considered these actions to have been "important" or "very important" regardless of case head status. However, their responses illustrate some interesting patterns.

First, among case heads, nearly three-fourths of the teens who had been sanctioned described these grant reductions as "very important." In contrast, only about half of the case heads who had

TABLE 6.2

PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF LEAP SANCTIONS AND BONUSES BY SANCTION/BONUS AND CASE STATUS

Perception and Sanction/Bonus Status	Teens Who Were AFDC Case Heads (%)	Teens Who Were Not AFDC Case Heads (%)
Ever received a bonus	47.9	40.3
Among teens who had received a bonus, those who said bonuses were:		
Very important	50.2	52.6
Somewhat important	37.6	28.7
Not important	12.2	18.7
Total	100.0	100.0
Ever sanctioned	24.7	18.2
Among teens who had received a sanction, those who said sanctions were:		
Very important	72.5	37.7
Somewhat important	18.1	31.2
Not important	9.4	31.2
Total	100.0	100.1
Sample size	649	424

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for all program group members in the survey sample.
Some teens who had been both case heads and non−case heads are included in both columns.
Case head status and sanction status are based on self−reports.
Some teens reported receiving both bonuses and sanctions.
Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

received bonuses described these payments as "very important."[2] The focus group discussions may help to explain why sanctions appear to "hurt" more than bonuses seem to "help." In almost all cases, focus group participants who had received bonuses said they spent the money on their children usually on items that would normally be considered necessities (e.g., shoes, diapers, or clothing). Thus, from the teens' perspective, the money, while certainly welcome, seemed to "disappear" and did not create real changes in their lifestyles.

In contrast, sanctions seemed to have had more serious repercussions. Although few focus group teens suggested that sanctions had caused them or their children to do without necessities (one teen said she would be homeless if sanctioned), several did say that the grant reductions "hurt."[3] More typically, teens said they "adjusted" to the reduced grant. In some cases, this clearly involved falling back on other sources of income. For example, one teen said that her boyfriend's family helped her get by when she was sanctioned. However, in most cases, it was not entirely clear how teens adjusted to the reduced income. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 7, some teens said that sanctions had caused them to enroll in school or an ABE/GED program.

Second, the survey data suggest that, while attitudes toward sanctions varied considerably depending on the teen's case status, opinions about bonuses differed only modestly in this regard. For example, approximately one-half of both case heads and non-case heads who had received bonuses rated the payments as "very important." In contrast, among teens receiving sanctions, the percentage of case heads rating these reductions as "very important" (72.5 percent) was almost twice as large as the percentage of non-case heads with this response (37.7 percent). There are several possible explanations for this. It may be that, in cases not headed by teens, the case heads (often the teens' mothers) are willing to share bonus money with the teens, but are also likely to "protect" them from sanctions. Some focus group participants suggested that this may be the case. Another possible explanation is that AFDC grants that include three generations are likely to be larger, which means that sanctions reduce these grant less in percentage terms (although the same logic should reduce the importance of bonuses). Several participants who had been sanctioned while living on their parents' grant said their mothers had been angry when this occurred, but there was little discussion of serious conflict between teens and their parents over either bonuses or sanctions in the focus group sessions.

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[2] It is important to note that only teens who reported that they had been sanctioned were asked to rate the importance of sanctions. Similarly, only teens who reported receiving bonuses were asked to rate the importance of these payments. These two groups of teens may have differed in important ways that may have affected their responses to the survey questions.

[3] Although many had been sanctioned, the teens who attended focus groups had all responded to LEAP to some extent. None of them had been sanctioned repeatedly and refused to comply.

III. Experiences with LEAP Support Services

In discussions about their LEAP experiences, focus group participants often highlighted the importance of LEAP support services – principally child care and transportation assistance. In fact, when asked to give an overall description of LEAP, most participants mentioned these services before discussing bonuses and sanctions. It was also clear that many of these teens had been profoundly affected – either positively or negatively – by the nature of their relationships with LEAP staff. This section uses survey and focus group data to characterize teens' experiences with this aspect of LEAP.

A. Child Care

For many teens, the ability to locate child care arrangements that they consider satisfactory determines whether they will attend school. When out-of-school teens were asked on the survey for the main reason why they were not enrolled in school, "I can't find adequate child care" was the most frequently mentioned reason for both program and control group members. (As will be discussed below, a teen's perception of her ability to find adequate child care depends substantially on her views about what types of child care are acceptable.)

1. Child Care Providers. The survey asked all teens who reported being enrolled in a high school or ABE/GED program on the interview date a number of questions about their primary child care provider. Their responses are summarized in Table 6.3. The table shows that the vast majority of teens use their own mothers or other relatives as child care providers, and that these providers are not paid. Overall, approximately one-third of the in-school survey respondents in both research groups said that their primary child care provider was paid, and about half of these (16 percent of all in-school teens) said that the welfare department paid for the care. In-school program group teens were only slightly more likely to use welfare-funded care than were controls.[4]

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[4] One would not expect a large difference in child care arrangements across research groups for in-school teens, since control group members are eligible for LEAP child care. However, since a larger fraction of program group teens reported being enrolled in school, the overall proportion of the program group using welfare-funded care was higher than the corresponding figure for the control group.

TABLE 6.3

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTIONS OF SELF-REPORTED CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS AND PAYMENT METHODS FOR IN-SCHOOL LEAP (PROGRAM GROUP) AND CONTROL GROUP TEENS

Primary Provider or Payment Method	Program Group (%)	Control Group (%)	All Teens (%)
Primary provider			
Teen's mother	46.9	49.3	47.9
Another relative	18.8	17.9	18.4
Child's father	8.8	7.0	8.0
Nonrelative/family day care	8.5	9.8	9.1
Day care center	10.6	9.8	10.3
School-run day care	2.7	3.4	3.0
Other	2.5	2.5	2.5
Payment method			
Primary provider not paid	66.7	63.6	65.4
Primary provider paid			
By welfare department	16.7	16.0	16.4
By participant	10.0	12.3	11.0
By family member	1.9	3.6	2.6
Other/don't know	2.9	2.5	2.7
Sample size	480	357	837

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for all survey sample members who reported being enrolled in a high school or adult education program at the time of the survey.

Distributions may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding or because of items missing from some sample members' surveys.

The reasons for this pattern are clear from both focus groups and discussions with LEAP staff. First, LEAP teens, like many other parents of young children, tend to be reluctant to leave their children in the care of strangers. The following quote from a Columbus teen illustrates two of the most common fears:

> I always have the fear my kid will grow up thinking this babysitter is her mommy. When you put them in there and they're real young, 7 to 8 months, and this person's around them all day and you're not . . . I'm always afraid . . . A lot of babysitters use corporal punishment. I don't go in for corporal punishment. I don't want anyone putting their hands on my child. That's always a scary thing.

Almost all of the focus group teens agreed with this view to some extent; many cited television reports about child abuse by day care center employees or babysitters. Several teens said they would be willing to consider formal care only after their children were old enough to talk and describe problems. In some cases, these fears appear to have been perpetuated (or created) by the teens' mothers, and their effect may have been exacerbated by the fact that many teens do not know how to evaluate child care facilities or help children adjust to separation from their mothers and grandmothers.

In addition to a general fear of formal arrangements, many of the focus group participants, particularly those with younger children, said they had had trouble locating suitable providers near their home or school. In some cases, they described home-to-child-care-to-school transportation "triangles" that literally took hours to complete. However, it is important to note that these teens' perceptions about the availability of convenient child care are closely related to their feelings about which types of care are acceptable. For example, some of them seemed unwilling even to consider using certified family day care homes, which are more plentiful than child care centers in many communities. Others expressed discomfort with school-based child care facilities – often considered an excellent option. Although they appreciated the opportunity they would have to check in on their children during the day, these teens were concerned that poorly qualified students would be caring for the children in these facilities, and also noted that transportation is a problem because babies are not permitted to ride school buses. Finally, some focus group participants said they had received poor service from county day care staff in locating child care slots near their homes or schools.

All of these factors push teens toward informal child care arrangements and, as described in Chapter 4, these informal providers are seldom paid by LEAP because Ohio law restricts payment to licensed or certified caregivers.[5] In addition, AFDC rules prohibit paying people to care for children on their own AFDC case. A few of the focus group teens voiced particular frustration about these rules, saying in essence that LEAP was willing to pay strangers, but not the child's own grandmother. One Cleveland teen said:

> I don't think its fair that they just . . . you know, my mom could be out working during the day instead of sitting at home babysitting for me . . . It's either that or she's going to see my future go down and she doesn't want to do that . . . and LEAP won't pay your mom, but they'll go out and pay anybody.

Another teen said that "sometimes you don't have good choices of day care and you just got to take what's given to you, and that's not right." Data from both the survey and the focus groups suggest that a substantial minority of teens pay either their mothers or other people out of their own pockets to babysit for them.

2. **Patterns of Usage**. There is some evidence that the proportion of in-school teens who are using LEAP-funded child care is growing over time. The overall figure for in-school teens in the first stage of the survey (administered in late 1990 and early 1991) was about 14 percent; this figure was 19 percent for teens in the second stage (administered in late 1991 and early 1992).

Other figures (not shown in the table) indicate that in-school teens with children under one year old were more likely to use informal care – and thus less likely to use welfare-funded care – than teens whose youngest child was 1 year or older. However, these differences are not dramatic. Teens in high school were somewhat more likely to use formal and welfare-funded care than those in ABE/GED programs, probably because the time commitment is greater for high school students. Finally, the proportion of in-school teens using welfare-funded care varied by county. The percentage is highest in Hamilton County, where 27 percent of in-school teens reported using welfare-funded care; the figure is 12 to 13 percent in Cuyahoga, Franklin, Lucas, and Lawrence counties. The reasons for these large county differences are not immediately apparent.

3. **Implications**. The effect of the teens' child care usage patterns on their school attendance is unclear. Most in-school survey respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the reliability, cost, and safety of their child care arrangements, no matter what type of provider they

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[5] In the Teenage Parent Demonstration, a substantially greater proportion of teens received child care assistance, in large part because informal arrangements were eligible for reimbursement. See Kisker, Silverberg, and Maynard, 1990.

used. However, more than 25 percent of in-school respondents in both research groups reported missing at least one day of school in the past month because of child care problems. Interestingly, this figure does not vary substantially by type of provider. For example, among enrolled teens who were using their mother as the primary provider, 29.7 percent reported missing school because of child care problems. The figure was 23.4 percent for teens who used another relative, and 26.7 percent for teens who used day care centers. Some LEAP staff have suggested that, while the teens' mothers are not always reliable providers, they are generally willing to care for sick children, whereas child care centers may not accept children when they are ill. Staff also caution that teens often use child care problems as a generic excuse when they miss school.

B. Transportation

LEAP transportation subsidies are widely used in many counties, and the focus groups suggest that these payments may be essential to some teens. In the large cities, monthly bus passes are perceived as especially attractive and valuable because they offer unlimited rides, rather than simply providing enough tickets to allow teens to get to school. Some focus group participants said they were initially attracted to LEAP because it offered bus passes and, as noted earlier, several teens said that if their transportation check came late, they could not afford to take the bus to an ABE/GED program.

C. Relationships with LEAP Staff

Several of the focus group participants said they had very close relationships with their LEAP case managers. They described a wide range of personal contacts, and said that the staff cared about them and pushed them to succeed. For these teens, positive reenforcement from staff seemed critically important, and they perceived good-natured "pestering" and occasional assistance with food, clothing, or transportation as signs that staff cared about them. Other teens expressed frustration because they seldom spoke to their case manager or because they felt they had not been treated kindly by LEAP staff. There were no clear differences in this regard across the counties where focus groups were held, but there seemed to be wide differences across individual staff members within each county. In addition, it seemed clear that LEAP case managers must often overcome strong negative feelings about "welfare workers" held by many teens.

In sum, it appeared that the quality of relationships with staff was a key determinant of focus group teens' attitudes toward the program, and that teens who had little contact with their LEAP worker were likely to attribute this to lack of concern on the worker's part. In addition, it appears that some teens who have little contact with staff may be less likely to understand the program rules, and thus more likely to be sanctioned for failing to provide proper evidence of good cause. As one Cleveland teen put it:

> My case worker . . . only met me like once. She didn't call me and see how I was doing. One time, I was out of school for like two weeks because I had a C-section when I had my son and I had a bad reaction from it later on. And she was tripped out . . . She called me at the hospital to see how I was doing. She had to know I was in the hospital . . . She still deducted money from my check!

Although it is difficult to tell exactly what happened in this case, it is possible that the teen failed to complete required paperwork to verify her condition, perhaps because she assumed this would not be necessary.

One way to measure the intensity of case management is through the incidence of home visits. On the survey, about 20 percent of teens in the program group reported that someone from the welfare department had visited them at home to discuss school attendance. This proportion is highest in Lucas County, where more than half the teens had received a home visit. The figure is below 20 percent in all other counties.

IV. Conclusions

The majority of teens who are eligible for LEAP appear to have positive views of the program in general, and think that it is implemented fairly. However, a substantial minority – particularly those who have been sanctioned – are much more ambivalent about the program. Focus group discussions suggest that, although sanctions do not seem to have caused these teens to do without necessities, they have caused substantial hardship. (According to the teens, bonuses are spent on their children in most cases.) In addition, many focus group teens had specific complaints about the way the program has affected them. Most often, these grievances concerned late payments. Finally, while they understood LEAP in general terms, many focus group participants seem to be confused about the specifics of the program rules.

Child care is a primary concern for many teens, and a variety of factors usually push them toward informal, unsubsidized arrangements. It is not entirely clear how these child care usage patterns are affecting teens' school attendance. Finally, for some teens, it appears that the quality of their relationships with LEAP staff is a key determinant of their overall view of the program. When these relationships are close, they appear to add an important element to the program treatment.

PART III

LEAP PROGRAM EFFECTS

CHAPTER 7

IMPACTS ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

This chapter assesses LEAP's effectiveness in achieving its key short-term goal: encouraging eligible teens to enroll or remain enrolled in school. Section I briefly discusses the strategy for assessing enrollment impacts, and Section II examines these effects in all seven Tier 1 counties, using information reported by teens on a survey. Finally, Section III uses survey and focus group data to explore the factors that affected teens' decisions about school in an effort to inform the interpretation of the impact estimates.

In brief, the results indicate that LEAP has produced a sizable and statistically significant increase in school enrollment. The program has affected both in-school teens, who were encouraged not to drop out, and out-of-school teens, who returned to school. Among out-of-school teens who resumed their schooling because of LEAP, most returned to ABE/GED programs rather than to regular high schools. This was particularly true among teens who had been out of school for more than a year at the point of random assignment (which, as noted earlier, took place when a teen's eligibility for LEAP was verified).

LEAP's impacts differed for subgroups of the population. The program appears to have been most effective in increasing enrollment time for younger teens and teens who had only one child (or were pregnant with their first child) when they entered the program. Older teens, most of whom were dropouts, took longer to respond to LEAP, and many never returned to school. The subgroup of teens who entered the program with two or more children had particularly small impacts. This subgroup is somewhat unusual because many of these teens entered LEAP long after they first met the program's eligibility requirements. This is because LEAP did not exist when these teens first became parents. In an ongoing program, one would expect fewer teens to enter after the birth of their second child. As this subgroup becomes a smaller share of the LEAP population, enrollment impacts may increase.

I. Strategies for Measuring Enrollment Impacts

LEAP's ultimate goal is to increase the economic independence and decrease the long-term welfare receipt of LEAP-eligible teens. However, the program's financial incentives can directly affect only the teens' school enrollment and attendance. Thus, as discussed in Chapter 1, the program's ability to achieve its longer-term goal depends on a chain reaction: Higher enrollment and more regular attendance must lead to greater school progress, which must in turn lead to higher graduation rates and, ultimately, increased employment and earnings and decreased welfare receipt. This chapter examines the first link in this chain – school enrollment – in an effort to determine whether LEAP is achieving its immediate objective. Chapter 8 examines the teens' attendance, using both survey data and school records data from selected districts and then follows the chain through graduation, examining early evidence on high school and GED completion. The final report on LEAP will reexamine the issue of school completion and consider other outcomes as well.

LEAP aims to increase school enrollment in two ways: by encouraging teens who are initially enrolled to remain in school and by encouraging teens who were dropouts[1] when they entered the program to return to school. In order to examine LEAP's effect on both school *retention* among enrolled teens and school *return* among dropouts, impacts are estimated separately for teens who were enrolled and teens who were not enrolled at the point of random assignment.

Further, in order to measure LEAP's impacts on retention and return, several different measures of enrollment are considered: (1) the proportion of teens who "ever enrolled" in a school or ABE/GED program during the first year after random assignment, (2) the proportion who were continuously enrolled throughout the first year, with "continuously enrolled" being defined in this analysis as enrollment for at least 10 of the 12 months,[2] and (3) the average number of months teens were enrolled during the first year. It is informative to examine a variety of enrollment measures because certain LEAP-induced changes in enrollment patterns appear in some of these measures but not in others. For example, a positive program group-control group difference (i.e., a positive impact) on the "ever enrolled" measure would indicate that LEAP caused some teens who otherwise would have remained out of school for the entire 12-month period to enroll for at least a short time. In other words, this type of impact indicates that LEAP increased the rate at which dropouts returned to school. In contrast, a larger average number of months of enrollment among the program group could indicate several different things. For example, it could mean that LEAP induced some dropouts to enroll in school (in which case, the impact would also appear in the "ever enrolled" measure).[3] Alternatively, it could indicate that initially enrolled teens remained in school longer than they would have without LEAP. In other words, LEAP may have increased school retention among enrolled teens.

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[1] This report uses the term "dropout" to refer to any teen who reported not being enrolled in school at the point of random assignment.

[2] This is considered continuous enrollment because some enrolled teens did not report enrollment during the summer months.

An impact on the proportion of teens who were enrolled for at least 10 months during the first year could also indicate more than one type of change in enrollment patterns. It might indicate that LEAP caused some teens who were initially not enrolled to return to school shortly after random assignment or, alternatively, that LEAP encouraged some initially enrolled teens to remain in school. This latter effect on school retention would not appear as an impact on the "ever enrolled" measure. In order to examine LEAP's effect on school retention, therefore, it is necessary to examine the program's impact on average months of enrollment and continuous enrollment for teens who were already enrolled at random assignment. For this reason, each of these enrollment impacts is presented for teens who were enrolled and for teens who were not enrolled when they were randomly assigned.

II. Self-Reported School Enrollment Impacts

This section examines LEAP's impact on school enrollment, as reported by the teens on the survey.[4] The analysis begins, in Section IIA, by presenting enrollment impacts for all teens and then, in Section IIB, separately examines impacts for teens who were enrolled and teens who were not enrolled at random assignment. The analysis then turns, in Section IIC, to impacts for several other key subgroups of the LEAP population. Section IID considers preliminary evidence on the effects of subsequent childbearing on the impact of the program, and Section IIE discusses how impacts might be different if this analysis had only examined an ongoing program. The final subsection, Section IIF, examines county-specific results.

The data source used in this analysis is the survey that, as discussed in Chapter 2, included more than 2,000 program and control group teens. With few exceptions, the analysis examines the 12-month period immediately following random assignment for each teen. Because teens were randomly assigned throughout a 27-month period, the follow-up period does not cover the same months of the year for each teen.

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[3] This type of impact could also indicate that dropouts in the program and control groups were equally likely to return to school during the first year, but that program group dropouts returned earlier during the first year than controls. For example, LEAP may have caused some teens who otherwise would have returned in month 7 to return in month 2.

[4] When possible, these responses were checked against enrollment information from school records. Overall, these checks suggest that the survey is a reliable data source for measuring school enrollment and that the impacts discussed here accurately describe the effect of LEAP. A more complete discussion of this issue is provided in Appendix C.

A. Overall Impacts

Table 7.1 reports impacts on the proportion of teens ever enrolled during the first 12 months after random assignment.[5] As illustrated in the first section of the table, 58.2 percent of teens in the control group reported being enrolled in a high school (or junior high)[6] or ABE/GED program at some point during the 12 months after random assignment. The corresponding figure for teens in the program group was 67.4 percent. This 9.1 percentage point program group-control group difference during the first 12 months represents a sizable and statistically significant impact on the proportion of teens ever enrolled.[7]

The first section also illustrates that enrollment impacts appear to have increased with longer exposure to the program.[8] The program-control difference in enrollment was only 5.5 percentage points during the first three months after random assignment (53.9 versus 48.4 percent). By months 10 to 12, however, the difference grew to 11.8 percentage points (56.0 versus 44.2 percent). These larger impacts in later months suggest that, for some teens, it took several months for the LEAP incentives to have an effect. The pattern is somewhat less straightforward when high school and

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[5] The analysis of enrollment impacts reported in this chapter includes the 1,188 respondents who were surveyed 12 or more months after their random assignment date. Appendix D includes tables reporting six-month enrollment impacts for the larger sample of 1,987 respondents who were surveyed six months or more after random assignment.

[6] As also noted in Chapter 2, the term "high school" enrollment is used to refer to junior high school enrollment as well.

[7] Regression analysis was used to estimate the program-control difference in enrollment and to adjust the program and control group means. This procedure adjusts for small differences in the characteristics of program and control group members at the point of random assignment.

[8] As noted also in the tables, teens are considered to have "enrolled in or already completed high school or ABE/GED" for all subsequent months after the month of high school graduation or GED receipt. For example, if a teen who was enrolled in high school at random assignment graduated in month 4, she is counted as having "enrolled in or already completed" high school in months 7 to 9 and 10 to 12, as well as months 1 to 3 and 4 to 6. Similarly, if she enrolled in an ABE/GED program in month 1 and received her GED in month 4, she is counted as having "enrolled in or already completed" for all 12 months. This method of counting enrolled months is used so that the impact on the number of months of enrollment will not be artificially lowered if program group teens graduate earlier than controls. The GED completion date is missing for a few teens who passed the GED test without enrolling in an ABE/GED program. These teens are not counted as "enrolled or already completed" unless they also had high school enrollment.

TABLE 7.1

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Time Period and Outcome	Program Group (%)	Control Group (%)	Difference
Ever enrolled in or already completed high school or ABE/GED during			
Months 1–3	53.9	48.4	5.5 **
Months 4–6	54.5	44.8	9.7 ***
Months 7–9	52.1	41.3	10.8 ***
Months 10–12	56.0	44.2	11.8 ***
Months 1–12	67.4	58.2	9.1 ***
Ever enrolled in or already completed high school during			
Months 1–3	44.3	40.6	3.7
Months 4–6	42.2	37.0	5.2 **
Months 7–9	39.2	34.8	4.4 *
Months 10–12	41.6	34.9	6.8 ***
Months 1–12	48.8	45.6	3.2
Ever enrolled in or already completed ABE/GED during			
Months 1–3	9.5	7.5	2.0
Months 4–6	12.0	7.4	4.6 ***
Months 7–9	12.9	6.5	6.4 ***
Months 10–12	15.0	9.1	5.9 ***
Months 1–12	20.0	13.2	6.8 ***
Sample size	605	583	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for the 1,188 survey respondents for whom there were 12 months of follow-up survey data.

"Completion" refers to high school graduation or GED receipt. A teen who achieved either outcome is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for the month of graduation (or GED receipt) and all subsequent months. For example, if a teen was enrolled in month 1, and then graduated in month 4, she is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for months 4 to 12, as well as months 1 to 3.

The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

ABE/GED enrollment are measured separately (presented in the second and third sections of the table), but in general the enrollment rates suggest that, for both high school and ABE/GED enrollment, LEAP had a larger impact during the second six months after the teen entered the program than it had in the first six months.

It is important to note that, while the 12-month impact on the proportion ever enrolled in high school – 3.2 percentage points – is relatively small and insignificant, the impacts for each three-month period are relatively large, and in most cases statistically significant. This pattern may seem puzzling. It arises because many control group teens, and not as many program group teens, spent only a few of the 12 months enrolled in high school. These control group teens, who were enrolled only a short time, are all counted in the 12-month "ever enrolled" measure, but they may appear in only one or two of the three-month periods. Since teens in the control group were more likely either to drop out or to return to school later, there are larger program-control enrollment differences during the shorter time intervals than for the full 12 months. This point will be made more clearly in the next table, which examines differences in the number of months enrolled.

Table 7.2 examines the number of months of enrollment for program and control group teens.[9] The evidence presented here suggests that program group teens spent significantly more of the first 12 months enrolled than did teens in the control group. During the first 12 months after random assignment, teens in the program group averaged one month more of enrollment than did control group teens. This is a substantial difference, given the short follow-up period.

The impacts presented in the first section of the table also suggest that LEAP has increased the amount of continuous enrollment among program group teens. The impact on the proportion of teens enrolled for 10 to 12 months during the first year was a sizable and significant 9.4 percentage points (42.0 versus 32.6 percent). In contrast, the impacts of LEAP on the proportion of teens enrolled 1 to 3 months, 4 to 6 months, and 7 to 9 months were all small and statistically insignificant. This pattern suggests that LEAP increased the number of teens who remained enrolled for the full year after random assignment, and not the number who enrolled for only a short time during the first year.

The second and third sections of the table separate enrollment in high school (and junior high

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[9] With slight discrepancies because of rounding, these distribution percentages sum to the 12-month "ever enrolled" percentage (e.g., in the first panel, 12.1 + 7.5 + 5.7 + 42.0 is approximately 67.4). Moreover, the program-control difference in these distribution percentages sums to the 12-month program-control difference (e.g., 0.2 + 0.3 - 0.8 + 9.4 = 9.1).

TABLE 7.2

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON THE NUMBER OF MONTHS ENROLLED WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
High school or ABE/GED			
Ever enrolled (%)	67.4	58.2	9.1 ***
Enrolled or already completed for (%)			
1–3 months	12.1	11.9	0.2
4–6 months	7.5	7.3	0.3
7–9 months	5.7	6.5	−0.8
10–12 months	42.0	32.6	9.4 ***
Average months enrolled or already completed	6.0	5.0	1.1 ***
High school			
Ever enrolled (%)	48.8	45.6	3.2
Enrolled or already completed for (%)			
1–3 months	6.3	6.6	−0.3
4–6 months	3.7	5.9	−2.2 *
7–9 months	2.7	4.4	−1.6
10–12 months	36.0	28.7	7.3 ***
Average months enrolled or already completed	4.8	4.2	0.6 **
ABE/GED			
Ever enrolled (%)	20.0	13.2	6.8 ***
Enrolled or already completed for (%)			
1–3 months	6.9	6.4	0.6
4–6 months	4.4	1.2	3.2 ***
7–9 months	2.4	2.1	0.3
10–12 months	6.2	3.5	2.7 **
Average months enrolled or already completed	1.3	0.8	0.5 ***
Sample size	605	583	

(continued)

TABLE 7.2 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for the 1,188 survey respondents for whom there were 12 months of follow-up survey data.

"Completion" refers to high school graduation or GED receipt. A teen who achieved either outcome is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for the month of graduation (or GED receipt) and all subsequent months. For example, if a teen was enrolled in month 1, and then graduated in month 4, she is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for months 4 to 12, as well as months 1 to 3.

The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

school, as noted earlier) from enrollment in an ABE/GED program. During the first year after random assignment, teens in the program group averaged 0.6 more months of enrollment in high schools and 0.5 more months in ABE/GED programs than did control group teens. These roughly equal impacts in *absolute* terms represent very different impacts in *proportional* terms. The average number of months of ABE/GED enrollment for teens in the program group was more than 60 percent higher than the control average (1.3 versus 0.8 months), while the program group average for high school was about 15 percent higher than the control group average (4.8 versus 4.2 months). This suggests that LEAP had a much larger proportional effect on ABE/GED enrollment than on high school enrollment.

As illustrated in the second section of Table 7.2, the impacts on the proportion of teens enrolled in high school for 1 to 3 months, 4 to 6 months and 7 to 9 months are all small and negative, while the impact on the proportion enrolled continuously – i.e., for 10 to 12 months – is positive and significant. The fact that a greater proportion of control group teens than program group teens were enrolled 1 to 9 months suggests one or both of the following: (1) initially enrolled controls may have been more likely to drop out of high school during the first 12 months after random assignment, or (2) initially unenrolled program and control group teens returned to school at the same rate, but program dropouts returned sooner. In order to determine whether or not LEAP is keeping enrolled teens from dropping out, it is necessary to examine these impacts by initial enrollment status. This is done in the next subsection.

B. Impacts by Enrollment Status at Random Assignment

As discussed above, in order to assess LEAP's success in increasing both school retention among initially enrolled teens and school return among dropouts, impacts must be estimated separately for teens who were enrolled and teens who were not enrolled at random assignment. These results are reported in Table 7.3. The top section presents evidence suggesting that LEAP was successful in preventing some initially enrolled teens from dropping out. Among this subgroup, teens in the program group averaged one additional month in school during the first year after random assignment. Further, among those initially enrolled, program group teens were more likely than controls to be continuously enrolled throughout the first year of random assignment (61.3 versus 51.1 percent). In other words, LEAP prevented 1 in 5 initially enrolled teens *who otherwise would have*

TABLE 7.3

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, BY ENROLLMENT STATUS AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Enrolled in school at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	83.4	77.7	5.7 *
High school	70.9	68.5	2.5
ABE/GED	13.4	10.2	3.2
Enrolled or already completed 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	61.3	51.1	10.3 ***
High school	56.2	46.9	9.3 **
ABE/GED	5.4	3.5	1.9
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	8.3	7.3	0.9 **
High school	7.3	6.6	0.7 *
ABE/GED	0.9	0.7	0.3
Sample size	349	319	
Not enrolled in school at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	46.8	33.4	13.4 ***
High school	20.4	16.2	4.3
ABE/GED	28.5	17.4	11.1 ***
Enrolled or already completed 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	17.5	8.4	9.0 ***
High school	10.1	4.9	5.2 **
ABE/GED	7.3	3.5	3.8 *
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	3.2	1.9	1.3 ***
High school	1.5	1.0	0.5 *
ABE/GED	1.7	0.9	0.8 ***
Sample size	256	264	

(continued)

TABLE 7.3 (continued)

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Not enrolled, out of school less than one year at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	53.5	42.8	10.8
High school	37.5	29.6	7.9
ABE/GED	21.5	14.6	6.9
Enrolled or already completed 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	27.2	12.4	14.8 **
High school	22.0	11.7	10.3 *
ABE/GED	5.2	0.7	4.5 *
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	4.3	2.5	1.9 ***
High school	3.1	1.9	1.2 *
ABE/GED	1.2	0.5	0.6 *
Sample size	80	115	
Not enrolled, out of school one year or more at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	42.5	27.6	14.9 ***
High school	10.5	8.4	2.2
ABE/GED	32.7	18.4	14.3 ***
Enrolled or already completed 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	12.5	6.1	6.4 *
High school	3.6	1.2	2.4
ABE/GED	8.9	4.9	4.0
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	2.6	1.6	1.1 **
High school	0.6	0.5	0.1
ABE/GED	2.0	1.1	0.9 **
Sample size	176	149	

(continued)

TABLE 7.3 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for the 1,188 survey respondents for whom there were 12 months of follow-up survey data.

The four subgroups around which this table is organized (e.g., "enrolled in school at random assignment") are based on the Teen Parent Information Sheet (TPIS) filled out for each teen at random assignment. The body of the table is based on the survey, which was administered 12 or more months later. As shown in the first row of the table ("ever enrolled in"), approximately 17 percent of teens who reported being enrolled in school on their TPIS reported on the survey that they had had no enrollment during the 12 months following random assignment. It seems unlikely that large numbers of teens withdrew from school immediately after random assignment. This pattern therefore appears to represent a fairly large discrepancy in reported enrollment from the TPIS and survey that cannot simply be disregarded as recall error on the survey (although some of it may have resulted from recall error). Such a discrepancy suggests that some overreporting of enrollment occurred on the TPIS for both program and control group teens. (Teens were unaware of their research status when they completed the TPIS.) Because of this overreporting, it is likely that some teens included in the "enrolled in school at random assignment" subgroup were actually not enrolled when they were randomly assigned.

"Completion" refers to high school graduation or GED receipt. A teen who achieved either outcome is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for the month of graduation (or GED receipt) and all subsequent months. For example, if a teen was enrolled in month 1, and then graduated in month 4, she is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for months 4 to 12, as well as months 1 to 3.

The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

dropped out from leaving school during their first year in the program.[10] These statistically significant program-control differences suggest that initially enrolled program group teens were less likely to leave school than their control group counterparts – i.e., that LEAP improved school retention.[11]

The second section of the table suggests that LEAP was also successful in encouraging some teens who had dropped out of school to resume their education. Among teens who were not enrolled in school at random assignment, 46.8 percent of those in the program group and 33.4 percent of those in the control group returned to school or entered an adult education program within the first year. Further, 17.5 percent of the program group and 8.4 percent of the control group reported 10 or more months of enrollment during the first year after random assignment. This sizable impact suggests that many of the dropouts who resumed their education because of LEAP did so shortly after they entered the program and remained enrolled for at least several months.[12] However, it is also important to note that, even with the LEAP incentives and penalties, more than half the dropouts did not resume their education during the follow-up period. Moreover, less than one-fifth of dropouts *who otherwise would not have enrolled in school* were induced by LEAP to take this step.[13]

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[10] This 1 in 5 figure is derived by assuming that 51 of 100 initially enrolled teens would have remained continuously enrolled during the first year without LEAP (as indicated by the control group mean). Of the remaining 49 (in other words, those who otherwise would have dropped out), LEAP induced 10 to remain enrolled.

[11] As also explained in a note to Table 7.3, the percentage ever enrolled for this subgroup (first row of Table 7.3) indicates that approximately 17 percent of teens who reported being enrolled in school on their Teen Parent Information Sheet or TPIS (completed at random assignment) reported *no* enrollment during the subsequent 12 months when they responded to the survey. It seems unlikely that large numbers of teens withdrew from school immediately after random assignment. This pattern therefore appears to represent a fairly large discrepancy in reported enrollment from the TPIS and survey that cannot simply be disregarded as recall error on the survey (although some of it may have resulted from recall error). Such a discrepancy suggests that some overreporting of enrollment occurred on the TPIS for both program and control group teens. (Teens were unaware of their research status when they completed the TPIS.) Because of this overreporting, it is likely that some teens included in the "enrolled in school at random assignment" subgroup were actually not enrolled when they were randomly assigned, and thus should have been included in the other subgroup.

[12] This is an important result because previous studies of programs that attempted to bring dropouts back to school have often found evidence that individuals who returned to school dropped out again quickly. It must be kept in mind, however, that the follow-up period was limited to 12 months.

[13] This assumes that 33 of 100 program group dropouts would have returned to school with or without LEAP (as indicated by the control group enrollment rate). Of the remaining 67 dropouts, 13 returned and 54 did not.

In addition, it appears that most of the dropouts who were induced by LEAP to resume their schooling entered ABE/GED programs, rather than returning to regular high schools. The program-control difference in the proportion who returned to high school was a fairly small and insignificant 4.3 percentage points. In contrast, the program-control difference in the proportion enrolling in an ABE/GED program was a fairly large and significant 11.1 percentage points.

As shown in the last two sections of the table, this pattern of impacts for dropouts varied substantially by length of time out of school at random assignment. LEAP appears to have induced some short-term dropouts (i.e., those who had been out of school less than one year at random assignment) to return to high school, although this impact was not statistically significant. In contrast, almost all longer-term dropouts who resumed their schooling because of LEAP entered ABE/GED programs. Moreover, the six-month results for this group (see Appendix Table D.2) suggest that these longer-term dropouts may have taken longer to respond to LEAP than did other initially unenrolled teens. The program-control difference in the proportion of these teens who ever enrolled within six months is much smaller than the corresponding difference over 12 months.[14] These impacts suggest that LEAP's success in encouraging dropouts to resume their education – particularly dropouts who had been out of school for a substantial period of time – was limited to the program's ability to encourage these teens to enter ABE/GED programs. LEAP did not succeed in encouraging longer-term dropouts to return to regular high schools.

C. Impacts for Other Key Subgroups

This section examines enrollment impacts by several other baseline demographic characteristics. The subgroups examined are based on the age, number of children, and case head status of the teens when they were randomly assigned.[15]

1. **Impacts by Age at Random Assignment.** Table 7.4 reports enrollment impacts by the age of the teen at random assignment. The impact on the average number of months enrolled was

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[14] The six-month impact on the proportion ever enrolled was 7.8 percent, while the 12-month impact was 14.9 percent. In contrast, teens who had been out of school less than a year had a six-month "ever enrolled" impact that was larger than their 12-month impact (18.0 versus 10.8 percent). This suggests that LEAP is encouraging some short-term dropouts (i.e., teens who are out of school less than a year) who otherwise would have returned during the second six months after random assignment to return instead during the first six months. In other words, LEAP accelerated the return to school of short-term dropouts.

[15] Significance tests were run and the results of these tests are reported for all program-control enrollment differences (i.e., impacts) presented in this chapter. However, unless otherwise noted, tests were not run for the significance of differences in these impacts across subgroups.

TABLE 7.4

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, BY AGE AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Age 12–15 at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	85.2	81.1	4.1
High school	83.8	78.9	4.9
ABE/GED	3.2	3.9	−0.7
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	8.7	6.9	1.8 *
High school	8.5	6.7	1.8 **
ABE/GED	0.2	0.3	−0.1
Sample size	58	55	
Age 16–17 at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	74.9	65.9	9.0 **
High school	60.8	55.1	5.7
ABE/GED	16.8	11.1	5.7 **
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	7.1	5.6	1.5 ***
High school	6.1	5.1	1.1 ***
ABE/GED	1.0	0.5	0.5 **
Sample size	282	259	
Age 18–19 at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	55.1	46.4	8.7 **
High school	28.9	29.1	−0.2
ABE/GED	26.3	17.9	8.4 **
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	4.3	3.9	0.5
High school	2.6	2.7	−0.1
ABE/GED	1.7	1.1	0.6 **
Sample size	265	269	

(continued)

TABLE 7.4 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for the 1,188 survey respondents for whom there were 12 months of follow-up survey data.

"Completion" refers to high school graduation or GED receipt. A teen who achieved either outcome is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for the month of graduation (or GED receipt) and all subsequent months. For example, if a teen was enrolled in month 1, and then graduated in month 4, she is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for months 4 to 12, as well as months 1 to 3.

The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

largest for younger teens. The program-control difference in average months of enrollment – a measure that reflects both retention and return effects – was almost two months for 12- to 15-year-olds but only half a month for 18- to 19-year-olds. The particularly small impact on average months enrolled for 18- to 19-year-olds suggests that LEAP was least successful in increasing the amount of enrollment of older teens.

Moreover, the enrollment impact for 12- to 15-year-olds is almost entirely attributable to improved school retention; the program-control difference in the percentage ever enrolled is relatively small and insignificant. As discussed in Chapter 3, there are relatively few dropouts among young teens and, as noted in Section I above, one would not expect to see impacts on "ever enrolled" measures for initially enrolled teens. In contrast, older teens, who were much more likely to have been out of school when they were randomly assigned, had significant impacts on the proportion ever enrolled.

The split of these enrollment impacts between high school and ABE/GED programs varied with age in some fairly predictable ways. Among 12- to 15-year-olds, who are in almost all cases not allowed to enroll in ABE/GED programs (see Chapter 4), the impacts were completely on high school or junior high school enrollment. Among 16- to 17-year-olds, who in some instances are allowed to enter ABE/GED programs, the impact, although primarily on high school enrollment, was split between the two types of education. Finally, for 18- to 19-year-olds, who are allowed to enroll in ABE/GED programs and who in many cases had been out of school for more than a year at random assignment, the impacts were completely on ABE/GED enrollment.

2. Impacts by Case Head Status. The first two sections of Table 7.5 present impacts by case head status at random assignment. In general, these impacts mirror the typical age of teens who are and who are not on their own AFDC case (see Table 3.1). Teens who are not on their own case tend to be younger teens. As discussed above, these teens had above-average impacts, which were concentrated on high school retention. Teens on their own case tend to be older teens. These teens had below-average impacts, which were concentrated on ABE/GED enrollment.

In order to separate the effects of case head status from those attributable to age, impacts were estimated by case head status for 16- to 17-year-olds only (not shown). One might expect that LEAP would be more effective for teens who headed their own AFDC cases, because the financial incentives would affect these teens more directly. However, this does not appear to have been the case. Among 16- to 17-year-olds, impacts were actually smaller for teens on their own case. For this

TABLE 7.5

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, BY OTHER KEY SUBGROUPS

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
On own AFDC case at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	59.0	48.9	10.1 ***
High school	31.9	32.9	−1.0
ABE/GED	28.6	16.8	11.8 ***
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	4.7	4.1	0.5
High school	2.9	3.0	−0.2
ABE/GED	1.8	1.1	0.8 ***
Sample size	311	316	
Not on own AFDC case at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	76.7	68.7	8.0 **
High school	67.4	59.8	7.6 **
ABE/GED	10.8	9.1	1.7
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	7.6	5.9	1.7 ***
High school	6.9	5.5	1.4 ***
ABE/GED	0.7	0.4	0.3
Sample size	294	267	
No children at random assignment (i.e., pregnant)			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	90.8	68.7	22.2 **
High school	69.0	61.8	7.2
ABE/GED	23.4	11.0	12.4
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	7.9	5.6	2.3 *
High school	7.2	4.7	2.4 *
ABE/GED	0.8	0.9	−0.2
Sample size	40	33	

(continued)

TABLE 7.5 (continued)

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
One child at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	69.3	59.8	9.5 ***
High school	52.2	47.9	4.4
ABE/GED	18.9	12.4	6.5 ***
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	6.3	5.1	1.1 ***
High school	5.0	4.4	0.6 **
ABE/GED	1.2	0.7	0.5 ***
Sample size	483	476	
Two or more children at random assignment			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	46.7	41.5	5.2
High school	18.8	23.8	−5.0
ABE/GED	26.8	17.7	9.1
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	3.9	3.5	0.4
High school	2.2	2.3	−0.2
ABE/GED	1.6	1.1	0.5
Sample size	82	74	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for the 1,188 survey respondents for whom there were 12 months of follow−up survey data.

"Completion" refers to high school graduation or GED receipt. A teen who achieved either outcome is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for the month of graduation (or GED receipt) and all subsequent months. For example, if a teen was enrolled in month 1, and then graduated in month 4, she is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for months 4 to 12, as well as months 1 to 3.

The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two−tailed t−test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

age group, the program-control difference on average months enrolled for 16- to 17-year-olds on their own case was 0.7 months compared to 1.8 months for those not on their own case.[16] Resembling the results for all teens by case head status, impacts for 16- to 17-year-olds on their own case were all on ABE/GED enrollment, while impacts for those not on their own case were almost entirely on high school enrollment. These findings suggest that, in terms of their enrollment patterns and impacts, 16- to 17-year-olds who are on their own case are more similar to 18- to 19-year-olds than they are to other 16- to 17-year-olds.

3. Impacts by Number of Children at Random Assignment. As shown in the last three sections of Table 7.5, impacts were smallest for teens who already had two or more children when they entered LEAP. Further, the impact that was found for this subgroup was only on ABE/GED enrollment. Since these teens tended to be older and were more likely to have been out of school for an extended period of time, this result is not surprising. In addition, as will be discussed in Section IIE, many of these teens entered LEAP under atypical conditions.

Twelve-month enrollment impacts were relatively large for teens who entered the program when they were pregnant and had no other children. In contrast, these teens had very small enrollment impacts during the first six months they were in the program (see Appendix Table D.4). It is likely that this delay in the impact for this subgroup was due primarily to the fact that these teens spent much or all of their first six months exempt from LEAP sanctioning because they were pregnant or had a child less than three months old.

D. Subsequent Childbearing

As noted above, the subgroups discussed in the previous section refer only to the number of children the teen had at the point of random assignment. However, responses to survey questions on pregnancy and current number of children suggest that many LEAP teens experienced subsequent pregnancies and births within the first year or two after random assignment. Overall, almost half the teens in the research sample with at least 12 months of follow-up available reported a pregnancy or birth since random assignment.[17] Other research suggests that LEAP teens are not unique in this regard. For example, the evaluation of Project Redirection, which served teenagers who were age 17 and under at baseline, found that 45 percent of teens in the program group and 49 percent of teens in the comparison group had at least one subsequent pregnancy within two years of baseline. These figures raise two questions. First, is there any evidence that LEAP itself affected the rate of subsequent childbearing among program group teens?[18] Second, given the small impacts for teens who entered the program with two or more children, did LEAP have a smaller effect on the teens who had additional children or became pregnant shortly after random assignment?

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[16] This difference in impacts was not statistically significant. Nonetheless, there is no evidence that impacts were *larger* for teens on their own case.

[17] This figure includes all teens for whom at least 12 months elapsed between random assignment and the interview; it is not limited to births and pregnancies that occurred during the first 12 post-random assignment months. In addition, the figure includes an unknown number of teens who were pregnant at random (continued...)

Regarding the first question, observers have offered two somewhat contradictory hypotheses as to why LEAP may have affected the childbearing decisions of participants. Critics of LEAP's pregnancy exemption have contended that this rule encourages subsequent childbearing among teens who do not want to attend school. Meanwhile, others have suggested that LEAP's basic incentive system discourages subsequent pregnancies because this makes school attendance more difficult. Survey responses do not support either hypothesis. The proportion of teens who had either given birth since random assignment or were pregnant when surveyed did not differ for the program and control groups.[19]

To answer the second question, it is possible to compare the impacts for teens who did and did not experience subsequent pregnancies during their early exposure to the program. One must make such a comparison with caution, however, because, unlike the subgroups examined thus far, membership in one of the subgroups depends on behavior that occurred *after* random assignment, and thus may have been a product of LEAP. As discussed above, however, there is no evidence that suggests that the patterns of subsequent childbearing were different for program and control group teens.

It appears that teens who had a subsequent birth or pregnancy experienced smaller impacts – particularly on high school enrollment. The 12-month impact on the proportion of teens ever

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[17](...continued)
assignment and have since had no further births or pregnancies. Thus, it overstates the percentage of teens who became pregnant after random assignment.

[18] Some critics have suggested that LEAP creates an incentive for *initial* pregnancies by providing bonuses and other special services to teens who become pregnant or parents. Since all of the teens in the research sample were already pregnant or parents at random assignment, this analysis cannot address this question.

[19] Further, although a few teens in the focus groups claimed that they knew "greedy" people who had additional children to increase their welfare grants, none of the participants could think of any reason why LEAP would affect teens' childbearing decisions.

enrolled in a high school or ABE/GED program was 6.9 percentage points for teens with a subsequent birth or pregnancy compared to an 11.3 percentage point impact for teens with no births or pregnancies since random assignment. For high school enrollment only, these impacts were -1.5 percentage points for teens with additional pregnancies versus 7.7 percentage points for other teens. The impact on average months enrolled in a high school or ABE/GED program was 0.7 months for those with a subsequent birth or pregnancy compared to 1.4 months for other teens. When this comparison is restricted to high school enrollment, there was no impact (0.0 months) for teens who had experienced subsequent pregnancies compared to an impact of an additional 1.2 months of enrollment for teens who experienced no subsequent pregnancies.[20] This evidence suggests that subsequent childbearing may have reduced the effectiveness of LEAP – particularly its ability to increase high school enrollment. These smaller impacts may have been due to greater child care difficulties for teens who had additional children or perhaps to the several months these teens spent exempt from LEAP sanctioning. Alternatively, teens who were likely to experience another birth may have had other attributes that reduced the impact of LEAP.

E. Impacts of an "Ongoing" Program

As discussed above, teens who were randomly assigned after the birth of their second child had particularly small enrollment impacts. Similarly, teens who had been out of school for more than a year had smaller impacts than did short-term dropouts, and these impacts took longer to occur. Further, for both of these subgroups, the small impact that did occur was primarily on ABE/GED enrollment.

It is important to note that both of these subgroups of teens were somewhat unusual because many of the teens in both groups were already eligible for LEAP when program operations began. As discussed in Chapter 2, many of these "on-board" teens would have become LEAP-eligible before the birth of their second child or before they had been out of school a year if the program had existed at that time. Therefore, they would have been exposed to the program earlier and longer. Perhaps if these teens had been exposed to LEAP from the point at which they first became eligible, the program would have been more effective in increasing their enrollment. Presumably, in an ongoing program, fewer teens would enter the program with more than one child or having been out of school for an extended period of time.[21]

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[20] The differences in these impacts were not statistically significant when high school and ABE/GED enrollment were combined. However, the impact on high school enrollment alone was significantly lower for teens who experienced a subsequent birth.

The above discussion suggests that the impact estimates presented here, which include these "on-board" teens, may understate the true impact on enrollment of a similar program several years into its operation. A few years into the program, when teens who enter after the birth of their second child or having been out of school a year or more become a smaller share of the LEAP population, LEAP's enrollment impact may well be larger. Moreover, since both of these subgroups had impacts that were primarily on ABE/GED, the impact of an ongoing program such as LEAP may be less concentrated on ABE/GED enrollment.

F. Impacts by County

Table 7.6 presents enrollment impacts by county.[22] All counties had positive impacts on both the proportion of teens who have ever enrolled and the average months of enrollment. Many of these impacts are not statistically significant, however, owing to the small sample sizes at the county level. In general, the magnitudes of the overall enrollment impacts were similar, although there was some variation across counties. The split of these impacts between high school enrollment and ABE/GED enrollment varied substantially by county. In terms of average months enrolled, the impacts in Cuyahoga and Hamilton counties were primarily on enrollment in high schools, while the impacts in Franklin and Stark counties were primarily on ABE/GED enrollment. In terms of impacts on the proportion ever enrolled (which reflects the behavior of teens who were initially out of school), Lucas County also had a relatively large ABE/GED enrollment impact and no impact on high school enrollment.

As discussed in earlier chapters, counties varied substantially in how they administered the program. The LEAP population also varied significantly by county in terms of initial enrollment status, number of children, and age, as described in Chapter 3. Moreover, economic and social conditions may vary by county in ways that influence the effectiveness of LEAP. For these reasons,

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[21] Other research has shown that teens often drop out of school before becoming pregnant (Moore, 1992). Thus, some teens will enter LEAP as dropouts even under normal conditions. In addition, a teen may enter LEAP with two or more children if she is not receiving AFDC before that point.

[22] Separate impacts for Lawrence and Muskingum counties are not reported because of sample size limitations. Appendix Table D.5 reports six-month impacts for all seven Tier 1 counties.

TABLE 7.6

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, BY COUNTY

County and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Cuyahoga County			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	65.5	59.4	6.1
High school	51.0	46.6	4.4
ABE/GED	15.5	13.6	1.9
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	5.8	5.0	0.8 *
High school	4.9	4.2	0.7
ABE/GED	0.9	0.8	0.1
Sample size	227	226	
Franklin County			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	63.2	53.9	9.4
High school	42.2	45.3	−3.1
ABE/GED	22.9	8.5	14.4 ***
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	5.4	4.5	0.9
High school	4.1	4.0	0.1
ABE/GED	1.4	0.5	0.9 ***
Sample size	108	109	
Hamilton County			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	72.0	60.4	11.6 **
High school	54.4	42.8	11.6 **
ABE/GED	20.9	16.5	4.4
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	6.6	5.2	1.3 **
High school	5.2	4.2	1.0 *
ABE/GED	1.4	0.9	0.5
Sample size	126	113	

(continued)

TABLE 7.6 (continued)

County and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Lucas County			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	69.9	60.4	9.5
High school	44.6	45.3	−0.7
ABE/GED	24.2	16.3	7.8
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	6.4	5.3	1.1
High school	4.7	4.1	0.6
ABE/GED	1.6	1.1	0.4
Sample size	79	79	
Stark County			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or ABE/GED	67.9	56.1	11.8
High school	48.6	53.0	−4.4
ABE/GED	21.6	6.0	15.7 *
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or ABE/GED	6.6	5.0	1.6
High school	5.2	4.7	0.5
ABE/GED	1.5	0.4	1.2 *
Sample size	41	36	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for the 1,188 survey respondents for whom there were 12 months of follow-up survey data.

"Completion" refers to high school graduation or GED receipt. A teen who achieved either outcome is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for the month of graduation (or GED receipt) and all subsequent months. For example, if a teen was enrolled in month 1, and then graduated in month 4, she is counted as "enrolled or already completed" for months 4 to 12, as well as months 1 to 3.

The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

one must interpret county differences in impacts with caution. With this caveat in mind, it is possible to suggest some hypotheses to explain the county differences.

Differences across counties in the characteristics of the LEAP population may explain some of the county impact differences. For example, as reported in Chapter 3, LEAP teens in Stark County were older than average. This may explain in part the concentration of this county's impact on ABE/GED enrollment. Similarly, Franklin County had the lowest proportion of teens enrolled at random assignment. Since LEAP tends to encourage unenrolled teens to return to ABE/GED programs, Franklin's low initial enrollment rate probably helps to explain why its impact was primarily on ABE/GED enrollment.

Differences in program operations may also explain some of the county variation in enrollment impacts. For example, as reported in Chapter 5, there was substantial variation across counties in the rates of actual bonuses and sanctions, according to survey self-reports (see Table 5.4). If higher grant adjustment rates in a county are attributable to more efficient overall management of the financial incentive system, then grant adjustment rates may partially explain enrollment impacts. Indeed, an analysis of the relationship between county impacts and actual grant adjustment rates indicates that these outcomes are correlated.

Differences in county and school district policies may also have created some of the county differences in enrollment impacts. For example, as discussed in Chapter 4, the application of the minimum age requirement for enrollment in an ABE/GED program varied by school district. In general, the Cleveland Public Schools (in Cuyahoga County) enforced the age requirement quite strictly, while the Toledo district (in Lucas County) allowed younger teens to withdraw from high school and enroll in ABE/GED programs more readily during the study period. This may explain why most dropouts who were induced to resume their education by LEAP entered ABE/GED programs in Lucas County, while most of these dropouts returned to high school in Cuyahoga County.

III. Factors Affecting Teens' School Decisions

This section uses survey and focus group data to shed additional light on the impact findings reported above. As noted in earlier chapters, 55 teens participated in focus group discussions in three counties; these teens do not necessarily represent all LEAP teens.

A. The School Enrollment Decision

The preceding sections clearly illustrate that LEAP affected some teens' enrollment patterns. The survey and focus groups present a complex picture of many of the other factors that affected school enrollment decisions.[23] It seems clear that LEAP was only one ingredient in this mix. On the survey, only about 20 percent of the program group teens in high school agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they attended school because "the welfare department wants me to go." Similarly, most focus group participants maintained that LEAP was not the only factor in their decisions about whether to stay in or return to school. Nevertheless, LEAP clearly did play a major role for some teens.

This section examines several of the key factors that influenced school decisions, and discusses the role of LEAP.

1. **Attitudes Toward School**. While beyond the control of LEAP, teens' attitudes toward and previous experiences in school appear to have had a major effect on their decisions about whether to return (or stay), and about what kind of school to attend. When asked to recount their most positive memory of high school, many of the focus group participants could not think of anything to say. It was clear from the discussions that, for many of these teens, becoming pregnant was only one factor that contributed to their decision to leave school; many had had very negative experiences prior to that point. Three frequently voiced complaints are discussed here.

First, although most of the survey respondents who were enrolled in school when interviewed said that they were "learning a lot" in school, several focus group participants criticized the instructional methods and attitudes of teachers. For example, one Cleveland teen described her high school this way:

> It's like, "Here is your book." . . . Don't explain anything, you're just expected to do it. Well, how are you supposed to learn nothing if they're not going to explain anything to you? . . . You're just supposed to learn it on your own, read it and expected to learn. And you could cut . . . you just walk out the doors. They don't care about you.

Several other focus group teens said that they often cut classes and usually got very poor grades. Among out-of-school teens who responded to the survey, only about 30 percent said that anyone from their school tried to talk them into staying when they stopped attending. Fewer than 20 percent said that anyone offered to help with personal problems, offered to help them make up work, or offered special tutoring.

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[23] These other factors presumably affect control group teens as well. Thus, the program-control differences in enrollment are attributable to LEAP.

Second, a number of focus group participants, particularly in Cleveland (where the focus groups included more dropouts), felt that they had been mistreated by teachers and staff during or after their pregnancies. For example, one teen said that teachers did not let her go to the restroom when she was pregnant or use the elevators in a multi-story building. Other participants said that staff or other students were often "nosy."

As will be shown in Table 7.7, about 25 percent of the in-school high school teens said on the survey that they got a "hard time" from teachers or students about being a parent. This figure was more than 30 percent among respondents in Franklin and Stark counties. In focus groups, the most common complaint was that schools refused to excuse absences that were caused by the teens' children's illnesses. For example, one participant, who was enrolled in a parochial school, said that she was given unexcused absences when she missed school because her son had surgery. As she put it:

> I got a phone call from my English teacher and she was like, "You might as well not even come back cause you . . . failed." . . . They won't excuse my absences because of what happened to my son . . . The dates that I missed they could not excuse them because it was not me sick or me in the hospital, so I just stayed out . . . They don't understand that, I mean, that if your kid is sick you cannot come to school. That should be an excuse.

Third, it is clear from the survey that many of the teens, particularly those in larger cities, perceived their high schools to be dangerous and unruly places. Even among respondents who were in school when interviewed, more than 70 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "other students often disrupt class"; more than half felt that misbehaving students often "get away with it"; and more than 30 percent said that they did not feel safe at school. The figures were particularly high in certain counties. For example, the fraction of teens who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "I don't feel safe at this school" was 35.7 percent in Hamilton County, 33.9 percent in Cuyahoga County, and 32.6 percent in Stark County. These proportions might have been even larger if out-of-school teens had been asked this question. Focus group participants – particularly in Cleveland – complained about fights, gangs, constant police presence, and sexual harassment by other students in school.

On the positive side, 65 percent of in-school survey respondents said they had attended GRADS

TABLE 7.7

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTIONS OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, BY TYPE OF EDUCATION PROGRAM

Perception	Students in High School (%)	Students in ABE/GED Programs (%)
I don't feel safe at this school		
Strongly agree	4.9	2.0
Agree	26.3	18.4
Disagree	57.0	62.7
Strongly disagree	9.1	13.1
Don't know	2.7	3.7
Other students often disrupt class		
Strongly agree	20.7	9.0
Agree	50.3	28.7
Disagree	23.8	53.7
Strongly disagree	3.9	4.9
Don't know	1.3	3.7
Other students or teachers give me a hard time about being a parent		
Strongly agree	6.1	1.2
Agree	18.5	5.7
Disagree	63.1	74.2
Strongly disagree	11.3	14.3
Don't know	1.0	4.5
I am learning a lot		
Strongly agree	11.1	16.0
Agree	70.3	74.2
Disagree	14.8	5.3
Strongly disagree	2.5	0.4
Don't know	1.2	4.1
Sample size	593	244

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for all survey sample members who were enrolled at the time of the survey.

Percentages refer to the combined responses of enrolled program and control group members.

Distributions may not add up to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

classes.[24] This figure was over 80 percent in Franklin County and over 90 percent in Stark County. Many focus group participants specifically mentioned strong relationships with GRADS teachers.

2. **The Influence of Family and Friends**. Several of the focus group participants described how parents, other relatives, or friends influenced their decisions about school. In some cases, these influences were straightforwardly positive or negative. For example, some participants said that a parent or friend had pushed them to attend school. A few said that their parents had left this decision to them. For example, one Columbus teen who was out of school said that when she first left school:

> My mom, she just told me I could stay home with her if I wanted to, which I did. I think if she would have pushed me to go back, I would have went back. But I didn't go back, which I regret.

However, in other instances, the story was more complicated. For example, several teens said that they were determined to complete school to prove something to skeptical family members. As one teen put it:

> The reason I'm going back now is because my sister is really the only one who really graduated from high school, and I want to prove to my cousins and everybody else who hasn't graduated, who's grown and on Section 8 [public housing] and everything else, who has five kids and four kids, you know I want to prove that it can be done even if you are out on your own.

Another member of the same group, an 18-year-old who was attending night high school, agreed, saying:

> My sister graduated and she's the only one that really graduated in my family, and they think I'm going to actually drop out of school. I'm going to prove to everybody that they're wrong . . . no matter how long it takes, I'm going to do it.

Although most focus group teens said that their boyfriends were supportive of their decision to attend school, a small number complained that their boyfriends were afraid of being "left behind" as the teen learned more and made progress in school.

3. **Goals and Aspirations**. Many of the teens in the focus groups suggested that they left

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[24] As discussed in earlier chapters, GRADS is an Ohio Department of Education program that funds and trains home economics teachers to provide special classes and services to pregnant and parenting students. The GRADS program preexisted the LEAP program and operates in many of the schools LEAP teens attended.

school in part because they felt that good parents should be with their children and should not leave children in the care of strangers. However, over time, some of them seemed to realize that the long-term health of their children depended on their ability to succeed in the labor force and, as mentioned earlier, they understood that school completion was necessary to achieve this success. Thus, in several cases, focus group teens who had returned to school said that their children were among their strongest motivators. These teens said they returned to school because they wanted to be able to help their children with homework one day, to set a good example for their children, or to be able to buy things for their children that they never had themselves.

In some cases, these teens seemed to reach this conclusion only after being out of school for several years and becoming more mature. LEAP staff confirm that it is critical to keep trying to work with teens who are resistent to LEAP at first because they often change their minds. One common view was expressed by a 20-year-old from Cincinnati, who had recently returned to an ABE/GED program (and aged out of LEAP):

> I was going to do it once I got ready to do it. You know, somebody forces you to do something, you don't want to do it. But, sitting around the house doing nothing, I could be doing something valuable with my time . . . Your kids look up to you. I want my kids to look up to me as being someone that got an education and helped them later on in life with their work.

The focus group participants' negative feelings about AFDC (described in Chapter 3) and their strong desire to leave welfare and live independently also played a role in encouraging some of them to return to or stay in school.

4. The Role of LEAP. Focus group participants expressed a variety of views about the role of LEAP in their decisions about school. One subset of participants said that they had not been affected by the program, and would have attended school even if LEAP did not exist. As one of them put it:

> It's good as far as the extra money. But as far as going to school, I would go to school anyway. If I was lazy and I needed more money, it might push me, but I want to go to school and get it over with.

In some cases, these teens said they thought it was wrong for people to go to school "just for the money."

However, other focus group teens indicated that LEAP did affect their school decisions. There were three general patterns within this group. First, some teens said that LEAP caused them to speed up a return to school that they had been planning anyway. This may be critical, because many teens who plan to return to school probably never do so. In some cases, focus group teens clearly said that they acted to avoid sanctions. As one Cleveland teen put it:

> It [LEAP] affected me because they was going to take some money out of my check that I needed . . . Yea, it did, it affected me . . . I mean, I was going to go back to school either way it went but . . . it made me go back sooner than I expected.

Second, some participants said that LEAP helped them stay in school when they considered dropping out. Constant attention from program staff seemed to help a few of these teens succeed.

Third, a few participants indicated that LEAP had motivated them to take and pass the GED test in order to avoid sanctions. Two of these teens had not attended ABE/GED preparation programs, but were able to pass the test on the first try. One Cleveland teen told the following story:

> The day I turned 18 . . . I went up there . . . laughed at them and said I'm dropping out [of high school]. Then they told me that they were going to start taking money out of my mother's check, and when my mamma started bickering . . . it was time to do something so I said I guess I'll go take my GED. So [my case worker] helped me get into the school downtown . . . for adult learning to prepare for my GED . . . I started taking my GED test . . . then I stopped . . . And when [my caseworker] called me and told me that I was getting sanctioned, I went down there quick and took four of those things [sections of the GED test] at the same time . . . My mother, she didn't want me to drop out, so I had to do something. She told me that if I didn't pass the GED test, I'd have to go back to high school.

A final group of teens, those who steadfastly refused to cooperate with LEAP, were not strongly represented in the focus groups (or, probably, among survey respondents), although staff describe them, and the data on sanctions and bonuses presented in Chapter 5 confirm their existence. Some further evidence on this group may be available in MDRC's upcoming monograph on the Cleveland Student Parent Demonstration (see Chapter 1).

B. Type of School

LEAP teens who are over 18 face a choice between high school and ABE/GED programs. (As discussed in Chapter 4, the availability of ABE/GED programs to 16- and 17-year-olds differs greatly across school districts.) This is a critical choice because, while LEAP implicitly considers a GED to be equivalent to a high school diploma, there is considerable controversy about the value of a GED in the labor market. Several factors seem to affect this choice.

Not surprisingly, several focus group participants who were behind grade level for their age expressed a strong aversion to traditional high school programs. One Cincinnati teen (who had recently aged out of LEAP) said:

> I'm 20 and the rest of them are younger . . . You know they be messing with you because of your age, which I couldn't care less. I'm here to get an education. I don't care how old I am. You think about that a lot and it can frustrate you a lot, being around them. In a GED class, you're around more people your own age that understand better than the younger kids.

Similarly, some participants who were in this situation felt that it would take them too long to graduate if they stayed in high school. One Cleveland 17-year-old who was in the ninth grade observed that her son would be starting kindergarten by the time she graduated. She said, "I feel like I'm wasting my life in the ninth grade." A few focus group teens also expressed negative views of GED programs, saying that they "just learned out of a book" and that the programs did not provide the type of broad education that is offered in diploma programs. However, even these teens had chosen to attend night high school classes rather than traditional school programs.

Survey responses about the environment in ABE/GED programs were also quite different from those about high schools. For example, Table 7.7 reports the responses to a set of questions about the school environment that were asked separately of students then enrolled in junior high or high school, and those then enrolled in ABE/GED programs. The responses consistently suggest that ABE/GED programs were perceived to provide a safer and more serious atmosphere for learning.

In addition to these factors, it is clear that ABE/GED programs are much more convenient for most teens, since they meet for many fewer hours and often have classes in the evenings, when working relatives or friends are available to babysit.

IV. Conclusions

The data presented in this chapter indicate that LEAP has both improved school retention among initially enrolled teens and induced some dropouts to return to school or, more typically, to enter ABE/GED programs. This is a critical result, which suggests that LEAP has made noteworthy progress toward its key short-term objective. However, it is important to note that the program had a relatively small overall impact on longer-term dropouts, and the effects that did occur for this group were concentrated on adult education programs. In addition, enrollment is only the first link in a long chain potentially ending in reduced welfare receipt. Chapter 8 examines whether the program's effect on enrollment has or will translate into effects on subsequent school-related outcomes.

CHAPTER 8

SCHOOL AND ADULT EDUCATION EXPERIENCES

Earlier chapters have described the chain of outcomes necessary for LEAP to achieve its ultimate objectives. Chapter 7 examined the first link in this chain – school enrollment – and concluded that LEAP has induced many teens to enroll in or remain enrolled in high schools or adult education programs. This chapter presents preliminary evidence on the next links: school attendance and completion. Its goal is to assess whether the enrollment impacts described in Chapter 7 are likely to translate into comparable impacts on high school graduation and GED receipt. Complete evidence on this issue is not yet available, since many of the teens in the research sample were too young to have graduated from high school or to have passed the GED test during the study period. Thus, the final report on LEAP will update the school completion evidence and also provide information about LEAP's impacts on other outcomes.

The first part of the chapter, Section I, examines LEAP's impact on school and adult education attendance, using survey data. Like the information on sanctions and bonuses that was presented at the end of Chapter 5, these data provide a "snapshot" of self-reported attendance at a point in time. Sections II and III examine additional high school and adult education outcomes over a longer time period, using data obtained from selected school districts and the State of Ohio. High school attendance and graduation are considered first (along with a brief discussion of school progress), followed by adult education attendance and GED testing. The final section of the chapter, Section IV, uses survey data to explore the self-reported school behavior and attitudes of teens in the two research groups.

The analysis presented in this chapter suggests three key findings. First, in addition to inducing teens to enroll in or remain enrolled in schools or adult education programs, LEAP has improved the attendance of program group teens who were enrolled in high school. Among those enrolled in ABE/GED programs, LEAP teens attended somewhat less than controls. However, because there were many more program than control teens enrolled in ABE/GED programs, the *overall* days attended in these programs were higher for the program group. Second, early evidence on the progress, graduation rates, behavior, and attitudes of program and control group teens enrolled in high school suggests that LEAP's impacts on high school enrollment and attendance may translate into comparable increases in high school graduation. However, it is too early to reach a final conclusion on this subject. Third, LEAP has already led to a small but statistically significant increase in the proportion of teens passing the GED test, although relatively few teens in either research group had taken the test at this early point.

I. Point-in-Time School Attendance Impacts

The data in Chapter 7 illustrate that LEAP has induced many teens to enroll in or remain enrolled in high schools and adult education programs. However, these data do not address school attendance. This is a crucial outcome, both because LEAP's incentives are designed to promote regular attendance and because attendance is presumably necessary if the program's enrollment impacts are to translate into graduation and GED impacts.

LEAP's impact on school attendance is measured as the difference between the program and control groups in the average number of days attended per teen during a specified period. This average encompasses all members of both research groups, including those who did not attend school at all during the period in question (i.e., had zero days attended). LEAP could have affected this difference in two ways. First, it could have induced more program group teens to enroll in school (indeed, Chapter 7 suggests that it has done so). Since only teens who are enrolled in school can attend, this enrollment impact would mean that a larger proportion of program group teens had more than zero days attended. This, in turn, would have raised the average number of days attended for the program group, even if program and control group teens *who were enrolled in school* attended at exactly the same rate.

Second, LEAP could have led to better attendance among the teens who were enrolled in school. In other words, program group *enrollees* might have had a higher average number of days attended than control group *enrollees*. If this were the case, LEAP could have increased the overall average days attended for the program group even without inducing additional teens to enroll in school.

This two-part impact calculation is illustrated in Table 8.1, which reports the teens' responses to survey questions about school attendance. All respondents who reported being enrolled in a junior high, high school, or ABE/GED program when surveyed were asked how many days they had been absent in the four weeks prior to the interview (teens were also asked how many days per week they

TABLE 8.1

THE EFFECT OF LEAP ON ATTENDANCE DURING A TYPICAL FOUR-WEEK PERIOD, BY ENROLLMENT STATUS AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

	Program Group			Control Group			
Subgroup and Outcome and Sample	Percent Enrolled During the Period	x Average Days Attended *Per Enrollee* During the Period	= Average Days Attended Per Program Group Member During the Period	Percent Enrolled During the Period	x Average Days Attended *Per Enrollee* During the Period	= Average Days Attended Per Control Group Member During the Period	Difference in Average Days Attended During the Period
All teens							
High school or adult education program	44.7	*13.3*	5.9	34.0	*13.0*	4.4	1.5 ***
High school	30.4	*15.2*	4.6	24.5	*13.9*	3.4	1.2 ***
Adult education program	14.3	*9.0*	1.3	9.5	*10.6*	1.0	0.3 *
Sample size	1,001			986			
Teens who were already enrolled when they became eligible for LEAP							
High school or adult education program	55.0	*14.7*	8.1	46.1	*13.4*	6.2	1.9 ***
High school	46.8	*15.4*	7.2	38.9	*14.1*	5.5	1.7 ***
Adult education program	8.2	*10.4*	0.9	7.1	*9.2*	0.7	0.2
Sample size	569			508			
Teens who were dropouts when they became eligible for LEAP							
High school or adult education program	33.0	*10.3*	3.4	19.5	*11.8*	2.3	1.1 ***
High school	11.1	*14.2*	1.6	7.1	*12.6*	0.9	0.7 **
Adult education program	21.9	*8.3*	1.8	12.4	*11.4*	1.4	0.4
Sample size	432			478			

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for the 1,987 survey respondents for whom there were six months of follow-up survey data.

Figures for average days attended per enrollee are in italics because they include only teens who were enrolled in school (rather than all program and control group memb

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

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were expected to attend, since ABE/GED programs usually meet less than five days per week).[1]

The top section of the table shows how the full group of survey respondents answered this question.[2] The shaded columns show the average number of days attended in the four-week period for all respondents in the program group and control group, respectively. The differences – noted in the last column of the table – indicate that LEAP led to a statistically significant increase in school attendance during this period. For example, program group teens attended high school for an average of 4.6 days compared to 3.4 days per control group member (a 35 percent increase). These averages are low because they encompass all teens in both research groups, including those who were not enrolled in high school (and thus had zero days attended) during the period.[3] This is discussed further below.

The two columns preceding each of the shaded columns illustrate how this "average days attended during the period" impact was generated. (As indicated at the top of the table, the shaded column for each research group can be obtained by multiplying the first and second columns.) The columns labeled "percent enrolled during the period" indicate the percentage of program and control group respondents who reported being enrolled at the time of the interview. These figures differ from those presented in Chapter 7 because they represent a "snapshot" of enrollment at a particular point in time, rather than focusing on a 12-month period. Nevertheless, as expected, they show that program group teens were more likely than controls to report being enrolled in both high schools and ABE/GED programs.[4] For example, 30.4 percent of program group respondents and 24.5 percent of control group respondents reported being enrolled in high school. This means that a greater proportion of control group teens had zero days attended in high school during the four-week period. This suggests that LEAP would lead to an increase in average days attended even if program group

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[1] This question provided a wide range of data, since the four-week period occurred at a different point relative to random assignment for each teen. The period was 6 to 11 months after random assignment for 40 percent of the respondents; 12 to 17 months after random assignment for 53 percent of the respondents; and 18 to 21 months after random assignment for 7 percent of the respondents. However, all teens were interviewed between November and March, during the academic year. It should be noted that the four-week period could have included holidays.

[2] As described in Chapters 2 and 7, a small group of about 100 survey respondents were excluded from all analyses because they were interviewed less than six months after random assignment.

[3] Some of the teens with zero days of attendance in high school were actually enrolled in ABE/GED programs. Conversely, some of those with zero days of ABE/GED attendance were in high school. In addition, teens who had already graduated or obtained a GED at the time of the interview were not counted as enrolled, and thus had zero days attended.

[4] This point-in-time enrollment rate reflects both the retention and reenrollment impacts described in Chapter 7.

enrollees attended no better than control group *enrollees*.

The middle column for each group, labeled "average days attended *per enrollee*," reports the average number of days attended in the four weeks preceding the interview *for those teens who reported being enrolled in school*. These figures reflect the information teens provided on both scheduled days and absences. Thus, for example, the average number of days attended was lower for ABE/GED students than for high school students, in large part because adult education programs usually do not meet five days per week.

The attendance data for enrolled teens tell a strikingly different story for high school and ABE/GED enrollees. Among high school students, program group enrollees attended somewhat better than control group enrollees (15.2 days attended compared to 13.9 days attended during the four-week period). Over the course of a full school year, this translates into a difference of more than 10 days per enrollee. Thus, the overall attendance impact for high school students was the product of both a higher enrollment rate and better attendance among enrollees.

Among ABE/GED enrollees (as shown in the third row of the first section), program group teens attended fewer (9.0) days than control group enrollees (10.6 days).[5] This was because program group teens were enrolled in ABE/GED programs that met fewer days per week, and because they were absent more often than enrolled teens in the control group. Nevertheless, the percentage of program group members enrolled was so large relative to the controls (14.3 percent versus 9.5 percent) that it outweighed the relatively poor attendance among program group enrollees. Thus, there was still an overall increase of 0.3 days attended in ABE/GED programs, on average.

The bottom two sections of the table focus on two key subgroups of teens: those who reported being enrolled in school at the point of random assignment and those who reported being out of school at that point. The figures show that the poor attendance for program group ABE/GED enrollees was concentrated among teens who were not enrolled in school at baseline. Control enrollees in this group attended 11.4 days compared to 8.3 days for program group enrollees. This suggests that at least some of the older, out-of-school teens who were induced by LEAP to enroll in ABE/GED programs attended quite poorly. No similar trend was evident for high school students: The differences in average days attended were significant for both subgroups. This is noteworthy because one might expect that dropouts whom LEAP induced to return to school might have had worse attendance than dropouts who returned on their own (as represented by the control group).

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[5] Ideally, ABE/GED attendance should be measured in hours rather than days, since the number of hours per day varies. Thus, it is possible (but highly unlikely) that program group teens attended programs that met for more hours each day, and thus actually attended as much or more than controls.

Overall, these self-reported, point-in-time data suggest that LEAP's impact on high school and ABE/GED enrollment has translated into increases in days attended in both types of program. The impact on high school attendance resulted from both an increase in the number of teens enrolled in high school and better attendance among enrolled teens. The ABE/GED impact resulted entirely from additional enrollment; attendance among enrolled program group teens was slightly worse than for enrolled controls.

II. High School Experiences

This section examines the attendance, progress (measured in course credits), and graduation rates, during the 1989-90 and 1990-91 school years, of program and control group teens who attended high school in any one of the 11 school districts where high school records were collected. This information supplements the self-reported attendance data described above because it covers a longer time period, uses a different data source, and addresses outcomes that could not be fully examined on the survey because of the relatively short available follow-up. Because it was not feasible to collect school records data in all school districts (as noted in Chapter 2, there are more than 100 districts in the Tier 1 counties), it was not possible to obtain data to calculate an overall high school enrollment rate for the program and control groups. Thus, this section focuses on "per enrollee" measures that include only teens who attended school in the targeted districts. Conceptually, this is similar to the "per enrollee" figures in the middle (italicized) columns of the two parts of Table 8.1.

Table 8.2 examines attendance and graduation rates for teens randomly assigned by the end of December 1989 (near the end of the first semester of the 1989-90 academic year) who attended at least one day in any of the four large school districts with computerized records (Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Toledo) during 1989-90 or 1990-91. The attendance averages in the top section include all teens who attended at least one day in the year in question.[6] These figures show that program group enrollees attended more days, on average, in each of the two school years than control group enrollees. The difference in 1990-91 is statistically significant. This is generally consistent with the "per enrollee" attendance figures in Table 8.1, which also showed better attendance for program group enrollees. Although district-specific results are not shown, this general

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[6] The sample size for 1990-91 is smaller than for 1989-90 because many teens who attended in the first year had graduated, dropped out, transferred to other schools, or switched to ABE/GED programs by the following year.

TABLE 8.2

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND COMPLETION OUTCOMES, WITHIN TWO SCHOOL YEARS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, FOR LEAP (PROGRAM GROUP) AND CONTROL GROUP TEENS ATTENDING AT LEAST ONE DAY, IN FOUR URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Average days attended among those who attended that year (a)			
1989–90	*93.7*	*85.2*	*8.5*
1990–91	*111.2*	*96.8*	*14.4* *
Graduated (b) (%)			
1989–90	*17.3*	*12.4*	*4.9*
1990–91	*9.0*	*6.9*	*2.1*
Two–year total	*26.3*	*19.3*	*7.0* *
Sample size	*675*	*148*	

SOURCE: Automated school records from the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Toledo public school districts, for those randomly assigned through December 1989.

NOTES: Cincinnati, Columbus, and Toledo data include all research sample members who attended junior high schools and high schools in the public school districts. The Columbus data also include a small number of overage teens attending ABE/GED. In Cleveland, the data cover approximately 75 percent of research sample members who attended schools in the public school district; the Cleveland data were reweighted to reflect the full sample in calculating the four–district percentages and averages.

The numbers are in italics because, unlike the tables in Chapter 7, the sample is restricted to those who attended school (rather than all program and control group members).

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

For percent measures, a chi–square test was applied to differences between program and control groups. For average measures, a two–tailed t–test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) The unweighted sample sizes for those who attended in 1989–90 and 1990–91, respectively, are 647 program group members and 138 control group members, and 263 program group members and 57 control group members. Most of the total sample attended in 1989–90; a smaller percentage attended in the second year (this drop is discussed in the text).

(b) Cleveland graduation rates are based on the district's projection in April of graduation status in June. The 1989–90 graduation rate excludes students who were projected to graduate in 1989–90, but who returned to school in 1990–91.

pattern was found in all four districts included in the table.[7]

The bottom section shows the percentage of program and control attendees who graduated during the two school years. The base for these percentages includes all teens who attended one or more days in *either* year: 675 program group members and 148 control group members (as noted at the bottom of the table). The figures indicate that program group attendees were more likely to graduate than control group attendees during the two-year period; the 7 percentage point difference is statistically significant. This result was found in all four school districts. The overall percentages of teens in both groups who graduated were relatively low. This is in part because the base for the graduation rate encompassed all high school and junior high school attendees, including younger teens who had not reached twelfth grade by 1990-91.

In part, the increase in graduation rates probably reflects the retention impact described in Chapter 7 – i.e., control group attendees may have been more likely to drop out during the period than program group attendees, some of whom were induced by LEAP to stay in school. It may also reflect better attendance by program group attendees. However, it is also important to recall that LEAP appears to have induced some dropouts to return to high school (see Table 7.3). As noted in the discussion of attendance earlier in this chapter, an increase in the graduation rate *per attendee*, such as the one reported in Table 8.2, given an increase in the enrollment rate, could eventually lead to an overall graduation impact that is even larger than the enrollment impact. Examining these graduation rates for school attenders by enrollment status at the point of random assignment (not shown) reveals that both returning dropouts and initially enrolled teens in the program group graduated at a greater rate than their control group counterparts.

Two important cautionary notes are necessary in interpreting these results. First, part of the graduation difference in Table 8.2 may have occurred because LEAP induced some teens who would have graduated anyway to graduate sooner. If this is the case, it is possible that the graduation rate of the control group will eventually "catch up" to the program group rate. Second, these results are measured for only four school districts. Although these districts represent most LEAP teens in the seven counties covered in this report, they may not be typical. Thus, it is not possible to calculate an overall graduation rate for each research group, or to accurately predict how these rates will vary over time.

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[7] Attendance per enrollee was generally higher for the program group than for the control group in all four districts, but some district samples were quite small. Also, it should be noted that there were complications with the computerized records in each district that may have affected the overall levels of attendance. (Some factors suggest that the attendance averages are overstated, and some imply that they are understated.) However, none of these issues affects the program and control groups differently, so they do not affect the impact estimates.

Information on class credits was also obtained from two of the four largest school districts (a third district provided information on credits attempted, rather than actual credits).[8] The program-control differences in average credits per enrollee were generally smaller than the graduation differences (and, in one district, control group enrollees earned slightly more credits, on average, than program group enrollees). None of these differences is statistically significant. The fact that credit differences were generally smaller than graduation differences could suggest that some of the teens LEAP induced to stay in or return to high school were very close to graduating, and thus earned few credits. This appears to be consistent with the results in Chapter 7, which suggested that most of the dropouts who returned to high school had been out of school less than one year; many of these teens may have been relatively close to graduating.

Data on attendance, credits, and graduation were also examined for teens who attended any one of seven smaller school districts.[9] As described in Chapter 2, since these districts did not have automated data systems, it was possible to seek records only for teens who reported on the survey that they had attended one of the schools targeted for data collection. Thus, the number of records obtained from these districts was quite small (approximately 40 in all). Overall, data from the small districts show virtually no difference in average days attended *per enrollee* over the two school years (control group enrollees attended somewhat more days in 1989-90, and program group enrollees attended more days in 1990-91). Interestingly, control group enrollees were somewhat more likely to graduate than program enrollees, although the difference is not statistically significant for either year. This difference results in part from the fact that control group enrollees in this very small sample tended to be older than program group enrollees.

III. Adult Education Experiences

As described in Chapter 7, there were in effect two paths for teens whose behavior was affected by LEAP: a high school path and an adult education path.[10] The results showed that the adult education path represented an important part of LEAP's overall enrollment impact, particularly for older teens and teens who had been out of school for more than one year, who rarely returned to traditional high schools.

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[8] These data are not included in the table because they were available for only two of the four districts.

[9] The districts were Canton (Stark County); Ironton, Rock Hill, and South Point (Lawrence County); Northwest Local and Great Oaks Joint Vocational (Hamilton County); and Zanesville (Muskingum County). Data were also included for a few teens in a Toledo Public Schools program not covered by the computer system. Data were collected only for teens in the first stage of the survey who reported attending these schools.

In assessing impacts on post-enrollment outcomes, it is important to note that there are basic differences between these two paths. The key distinction is that, while students are generally unable to obtain a diploma without attending high school, they can pass the GED test without enrolling in an ABE/GED program. Indeed, among survey respondents who reported that they had passed the GED, about half said they were never enrolled in a preparation program.[11] This suggests that the approach used in the previous section for high school students – which focuses on enrollees – would not tell the full story on GED completion, since it would miss teens who tested without enrolling. Fortunately, data on GED testing are available for all teens, not just those who enrolled in ABE/GED programs.

This section begins by assessing the attendance (measured in hours) of teens who attended ABE/GED programs in one school district where reliable attendance data were available. This is quite similar to the high school analysis described in the previous section in that it focuses only on teens who actually attended these programs. Once again, it supplements the point-in-time attendance data reported in the first section of the chapter by covering a longer period. The second part of the section directly assesses LEAP's impact on GED testing and completion, including all teens in the Tier 1 research sample, regardless of whether they enrolled in an ABE/GED program.

A. ABE/GED Program Attendance

As discussed earlier, it was difficult to collect detailed data on the attendance of teens who attended ABE/GED programs because these records were frequently incomplete or inaccessible. Thus, this analysis focuses on only one school district, Toledo, where relatively complete data could be obtained for teens who attended adult education programs operated by the public school system. As noted in Chapter 7, almost all of the dropouts who returned to school in Lucas County because of LEAP entered ABE/GED programs.

These ABE/GED attendance data, though quite limited, generally support the self-reported attendance data described in the first section of this chapter. Among teens who enrolled in and attended ABE/GED programs operated by the Toledo Public Schools, control group enrollees attended, on average, slightly more total hours during the first two years after random assignment than program group enrollees.

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[10] A small percentage of teens attended both types of program during the follow-up period.

[11] There was no program-control difference in the proportion of GED completers who reported that they had never enrolled in an ABE/GED program.

B. GED Testing and Completion Impacts

Table 8.3 examines LEAP's impact on GED testing and completion, based on statewide computerized information maintained by the Ohio Department of Education. As noted earlier, this comparison includes all teens in the Tier 1 research sample, regardless of whether they enrolled in ABE/GED programs. Table 8.3 focuses on teens randomly assigned through September 1990 (a total of 4,225 individuals), and examines the first 18 months after random assignment for each teen.

Table 8.3 shows that LEAP has already led to a small but statistically significant increase in the proportion of teens taking and passing the GED test within 18 months of random assignment.[12] The only county with a statistically significant impact on GED completion was Lucas, where, as noted above, almost all returning dropouts entered ABE/GED programs. As is true of the high school graduation rates presented in Table 8.2, the overall rates of GED testing and completion are low for both groups. This is in part because the table includes teens of all ages, even those under age 18, who are not usually permitted to take the GED test in Ohio. In addition, the table includes many teens who attended high school, few of whom would be expected to take the GED test. Thus, the percentage of teens taking and passing the test, among those who might have been expected to take these steps, would be substantially higher.

The impact on GED completion shown in Table 8.3 is smaller than the increase in ABE/GED program enrollment described in Chapter 7. This may be attributable in part to the relatively poor attendance of longer-term dropouts who entered ABE/GED programs during the follow-up period (see Table 8.1). These teens may have been unlikely to make progress in the programs.

As noted in Chapter 7, there is some limited evidence from focus group discussions that LEAP may have induced some teens to take the GED test without enrolling in a program in order to avoid the LEAP requirement. Although it is clear from the survey that many teens take the test without enrolling in programs, it is difficult to determine whether any of the *increase* in GED attainment described above is attributable to this phenomenon. It is interesting to note that, in Table 8.3, the

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[12] As noted earlier in the discussion of high school graduation, it is possible that control group teens will "catch up" by passing the GED test later.

TABLE 8.3

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON GED TESTING AND COMPLETION FOR TEENS RANDOMLY ASSIGNED THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1990 WITHIN 18 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

	Cuyahoga			Franklin			Hamilton			Lucas		
Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
GED test taken (%)	6.2	4.3	1.9	5.2	2.0	3.2 *	4.7	2.8	1.9	5.8	1.0	4.8 **
GED test passed (%)	4.2	3.4	0.8	3.8	1.3	2.5	3.6	2.8	0.8	3.2	0.0	3.2 *
Sample size	1,306	323		629	149		740	177		378	99	

	Stark			Other Small Counties			Total		
Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Program Group	Control Group	Difference	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
GED test taken (%)	5.8	3.6	2.2	3.8	0.0	3.8 (a)	5.6	3.0	2.6 ***
GED test passed (%)	4.5	3.6	0.9	2.9	0.0	2.9 (a)	3.9	2.4	1.5 **
Sample size	243	55		104	22		3,400	825	

SOURCE: Automated GED testing data from the Ohio Department of Education.

NOTES: Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A chi-square test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) A test of statistical significance was not applicable.

increase in GED *testing* is larger than the impact on *passing*. This is because program group members were more likely to test and fail; the pass rates for program and control group members were approximately 70 and 80 percent, respectively. This suggests that LEAP may be inducing teens to take the GED test before they are ready to do so, perhaps in an effort to avoid the enrollment and attendance requirements. Nonetheless, as noted above, LEAP also increased the percentage of teens who did pass the test.

To examine this question further, GED testing and completion rates were assessed for the first three and six months after random assignment (not shown). These short follow-up periods were designed to capture effects caused by teens who tested quickly to get out of LEAP. However, there was no significant difference in the overall proportion in each group who took the exam or passed during these early months. This does not answer the question definitively. Program group teens could be more likely to test without entering programs, but this effect might not appear within six months of random assignment (i.e., they could wait to test until they have been sanctioned several times for failing to enroll in a program).

IV. Self-Reported School Behavior and Attitudes

Another way to measure whether program group teens who were in school were as likely to make progress and graduate as in-school controls is to examine the teens' self-reported school behavior and attitudes. A set of survey questions sheds light on this subject by exploring school preparation, perceptions about the likelihood of completing school, the prevalence of discipline problems, and reasons for attending school, among teens who reported enrollment in high schools and adult education programs.

In general, the evidence from these survey questions suggests that program group teens attended high school for much the same reasons and behaved similarly to control group teens who were in high school. If anything, program group enrollees may have been slightly more likely to exhibit positive behavior, although the differences were not statistically significant. This is an important finding because, as noted earlier, one might expect that program group enrollees, some of whom were induced to return to or stay in school under a threat of sanctions, might exhibit different attitudes and behavior patterns than control group enrollees. Once again, given an enrollment increase, a finding that the two groups of enrollees were similar suggests that LEAP's enrollment impacts are likely to translate into comparable progress and graduation effects.

Among students in ABE/GED programs, the pattern was in the opposite direction. Program group members were somewhat more likely to be unprepared, to have negative attitudes, and to exhibit behavioral problems. Although the evidence is not firm, these results suggest that program group members who were induced by LEAP to enroll in ABE/GED programs may have been somewhat less motivated – or at least motivated by different factors – than control group members in these programs. This appears to be consistent with the attendance results described earlier in the first section of this chapter.

A. School Behavior

Just over 55 percent of program group respondents who reported being enrolled in high school said that they "always" had their homework done; the figure for controls in high school was just under 53 percent. A similar pattern is evident in terms of discipline problems and class cutting. Among high school students, program and control group members were equally likely to say that they had been in trouble, and program group teens were less likely than controls to say they had ever been suspended or that they sometimes cut classes (18 percent for controls versus 16.9 percent for program group members).

Among ABE/GED students, the pattern was in the opposite direction: control group enrollees were more likely to say that they spent more than 3 hours in the past week working at home. Similarly, program group members were more likely than controls to say they had ever been in trouble for not obeying program rules.

B. School Attitudes

Table 8.4 illustrates the responses of teens enrolled in high school and ABE/GED programs to a series of questions about the reasons why they attended school. High school students are depicted in the first two columns, and ABE/GED students in the last two columns. In general, the responses suggest that program group teens were in high school for very much the same reasons as in-school control group members. In fact, the difference in the proportion of program and control group teens who said they attended school "because the welfare department wants me to go" was not very large. Similarly, regarding the teens' perception of the likelihood of graduation (not shown), program group members in high school were slightly more likely than control group members to say that they were "very sure" they would graduate (72 percent for program group enrollees and 70 percent for control group enrollees). As noted earlier, the fact that program group enrollees' attitudes and expectations appear to be generally similar to those of control group enrollees provides further evidence that LEAP's enrollment impacts are likely to translate into progress and completion effects.

TABLE 8.4

ENROLLED TEENS' REASONS FOR ATTENDING SCHOOL OR AN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM, BY RESEARCH GROUP

	High School Students (%)		ABE/GED Students (%)	
Reason	Program Group	Control Group	Program Group	Control Group
I think the subjects I'm taking are interesting and challenging				
Strongly agree	13.2	13.9	17.7	15.5
Agree	66.2	63.7	65.3	64.9
Disagree	19.8	18.5	11.6	15.5
Strongly disagree	0.9	2.3	2.7	1.0
Don't know	0.0	1.5	2.7	3.1
I have nothing better to do				
Strongly agree	2.1	2.7	2.7	2.1
Agree	18.9	17.4	22.4	14.4
Disagree	67.4	64.1	59.2	68.0
Strongly disagree	11.1	14.3	13.6	13.4
Don't know	0.6	1.5	2.0	2.1
Education is important for getting a job later on				
Strongly agree	47.3	49.0	50.3	53.6
Agree	51.5	46.7	45.6	43.3
Disagree	0.6	1.5	2.0	3.1
Strongly disagree	0.6	1.9	0.0	0.0
Don't know	0.0	0.8	2.0	0.0
It's a place to meet my friends				
Strongly agree	4.8	2.7	2.7	2.1
Agree	32.9	34.0	24.5	21.6
Disagree	56.3	55.2	61.9	61.9
Strongly disagree	5.4	6.6	8.8	12.4
Don't know	0.6	1.5	2.0	2.1
Because the welfare department wants me to go				
Strongly agree	2.7	2.7	3.4	1.0
Agree	17.7	13.1	30.6	6.2
Disagree	67.7	69.1	55.1	73.2
Strongly disagree	11.4	13.5	7.5	17.5
Don't know	0.6	1.5	3.4	2.1
Sample size	334	259	147	97

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: Calculations for this table used data for all survey sample members who reported being enrolled in a school or education program when interviewed.

Distributions may not add up to 100.0 percent because of rounding.

Once again, program group teens in ABE/GED programs were less certain they would complete their GED (75 percent for control group enrollees versus 72 percent for program group enrollees), and more likely to say they attended their programs because of pressure from LEAP, than control group members in these programs.

V. Conclusions

The data in this chapter suggest that, in addition to promoting high school enrollment and retention, LEAP has increased attendance among enrolled teens. The improved attendance may ultimately translate into significant impacts on high school graduation. In addition, there is already a small but statistically significant increase in GED completion; this increase is smaller than the impact on ABE/GED program enrollment.

These are encouraging results, but they are tempered by several factors. First, the story on high school graduation and GED receipt is not yet complete owing to the age of the teens in the research sample. A more complete picture will have to await the final report.

Second, it is possible that LEAP has accelerated high school graduation and GED completion among teens who would have reached these milestones eventually. If this is true, it is likely that at least some of the gains will disappear with longer follow-up.

Third, and finally, it is not clear whether impacts on high school graduation and GED receipt will translate into later increases in employment and earnings and decreases in AFDC receipt, especially since the LEAP treatment ends at graduation. There is considerable controversy about the value of a GED in the labor market, and little is known about how a high school diploma – especially one that may have been obtained under a program mandate – is likely to affect the labor market experiences of teen parents such as those in LEAP. Thus, it will be critical to examine the school-to-work transition for these teens in the final report if it is feasible to obtain the necessary data.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE LEAP MODEL

TABLE A.1

KEY FEATURES OF THE LEAP MODEL

Eligibility Criteria	LEAP is mandatory for all pregnant teenagers and teenage custodial parents (under age 20) who are receiving AFDC and do not have a high school diploma or GED.(a) This includes teens who are case heads as well as those receiving assistance on someone else's case.
The LEAP Mandate	Teens are required to regularly attend a school or education program leading to a high school diploma or its equivalent (a GED) for the entire period that they remain eligible for LEAP.
Exemption Criteria	Teens may be temporarily exempted from the LEAP mandate if one or more of the following apply: • The teen is pregnant and the pregnancy is in the third month or later.(b) • The teen is the primary caregiver of a child who is less than three months old. • Child care that the teen needs in order to attend school is not available. • Transportation to or from school or a child care facility is necessary but not available. • The teen or the teen's child has an illness that is expected to last one month or longer. • The teen has been expelled from school and no other is available. • Other exceptional circumstances. When either the first or second reason applies, teens may choose to volunteer for LEAP, making them eligible for enrollment and attendance bonuses (see below).
Assessment Interview	Teens are required to attend an assessment interview when they become eligible for LEAP and a reassessment interview at least once each year. Teens who miss two scheduled appointments without good reason are subject to a $62 sanction for each month that they fail to attend.
School Enrollment Requirement	After being assessed as eligible for LEAP, teens have 10 days to provide proof of school enrollment. Teens who provide this evidence receive a $62 enrollment bonus.(c) Teens who fail to enroll have their AFDC grant reduced by $62 each month until they comply.
School Attendance Standards	Once enrolled, teens attending full-time high school (or junior high school) programs are eligible for a $62 attendance bonus if they have two or fewer unexcused absences in a month and four or fewer total absences in that month. Teens with more than two unexcused absences have their welfare grant reduced by $62. Those with two or fewer unexcused absences, but more than four total absences, receive neither a bonus nor a sanction. Attendance standards for part-time education programs (such as adult education classes) vary according to the number of days scheduled.

(continued)

TABLE A.1 (continued)

Schedule for Grant Adjustments	Schools provide monthly attendance reports on enrolled teens. Teens who do not meet the attendance requirement are notified and have 7 days to provide evidence of good cause for each absence (see below). If good cause is not granted, the teen receives notice of an impending sanction and has 15 days to request a hearing. Attendance sanctions and bonuses occur three months after the attendance that triggers them.
Good Cause Criteria	Teens may be granted good cause for an absence if any of the following apply: • The teen or the teen's child was ill, injured, or incapacitated. • The teen's normal child care arrangement was unavailable, and no alternative was available. • The teen's normal transportation to school or to her child care facility was unavailable, and no alternative was available. • The teen or the teen's child had a scheduled or emergency appointment for medical, dental, or vision care. • The teen was needed to care for an ill family member. • A member of the teen's family died. • The teen had a scheduled or emergency appointment at a court or CDHS. • Other exceptional circumstances. In addition, absences caused by an illness or injury of the teen or her child are not counted if verified by a physician's statement.(d)
Support Services	Teens are entitled to receive program-funded child care if they need it to attend school; they may also receive transportation assistance for this purpose. Teens may get a summer job through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), and the wages they earn are disregarded in welfare grant calculations. In addition, each teen is assigned to a case manager, who is responsible for helping the teen remove barriers that prevent her from attending school.

SOURCE: LEAP program regulations from the Ohio Department of Human Services.

NOTES: (a) From the program's inception until September 1, 1990, eligibility extended until the teen's nineteenth birthday, and only teen parents were included. On that date, eligibility was expanded to include 19-year-olds and teens who are pregnant with their first child.

(b) The pregnancy exemption was added effective September 1, 1990.

(c) Teens may receive one enrollment bonus per school year.

(d) When good cause is granted, an unexcused absence effectively becomes excused but is still counted in the monthly total. In contrast, absences for which the teen obtains a physician's statement are not counted at all.

APPENDIX B

NONRESPONSE IN THE OHIO LEAP SURVEY

APPENDIX B

NONRESPONSE IN THE OHIO LEAP SURVEY

This appendix examines the ways in which survey nonresponse may have affected the impacts described in this report. The analysis focuses on two key questions. First, were there systematic differences between program and control group members who responded to the survey? In particular, it is important to determine whether these differences created program-control differences in the baseline characteristics of teens analyzed in Chapter 7. Second, are the survey respondents analyzed in the report representative of the entire LEAP population? In other words, do these survey respondents look like all LEAP teens?

The answer to the first question is crucial, because it is assumed that any program-control difference in enrollment arises because only the program group was exposed to LEAP. If there were preexisting differences in the characteristics of program and control group members included in the analysis (and these differences are not controlled for), then differences in the enrollment patterns of these two groups that arose owing to these differences in initial characteristics will be incorrectly attributed to the effects of the program. When the program group has initial characteristics that are significantly different from the control group with which it is being compared, the analysis is said to lack *internal* validity. As discussed in the main body of the report, this evaluation used random assignment to create the program and control groups. Therefore, problems with internal validity are unlikely. Nonetheless, it is still possible that program and control members may differ significantly on certain baseline characteristics. In addition, differences in who among teens in the program and control groups responded to the survey may have introduced program-control differences in the baseline characteristics of survey respondents. For this reason, all impacts reported in Chapter 7 are regression adjusted, a procedure that corrects for observable differences in initial characteristics. A program-control comparison of the baseline characteristics of the survey respondents who were analyzed in Chapter 7 is included in this appendix.

The answer to the second question is also important, even if the program group members who are included in the analysis looked like their control group counterparts at baseline. If the subset of sample members who are in the analysis do not accurately reflect the LEAP population, then the impacts may be biased estimates of the true effects of LEAP on the entire population. The impacts that are estimated will reflect the effects of the program on the subset of teens who are analyzed (in this case, survey respondents with at least 12 months of follow-up), but *not necessarily* the effect of the program on the full LEAP population. If the subsample that is examined does not accurately reflect the full sample, the estimated effects may not be generalizable to the entire eligible population. In this case, the analysis is said to lack *external* validity. Both the internal validity and external validity of the LEAP analysis are considered in this appendix.

I. Internal Validity of the Results

Differential response patterns by program and control group members could lead to an analysis that is not internally valid. Table B.1 presents response rates for program and control group members.[1] It shows that an identical proportion of program and control group members, 74.4 percent, responded to the LEAP survey. The table also indicates that similar proportions of the program and control group (43 percent and 42 percent, respectively) were respondents who were surveyed 12 or more months after random assignment. This is the subsample used in the enrollment impact analysis reported in Chapter 7.

Even though program and control group members responded at the same rate, it is still possible that differences in response patterns between the two groups may have created significant program-control differences in certain baseline characteristics. For example, if program group respondents were concentrated among those initially enrolled in school, while control group respondents were concentrated among those initially not enrolled, then there would be a significant program-control difference on initial enrollment status among survey respondents.

Table B.2 compares the baseline characteristics of program and control group members in the full survey sample (respondents and nonrespondents combined). Table B.3 makes this comparison for survey respondents with 12 or more months of follow-up. On almost all baseline characteristics, there was no program-control difference. In both the full sample and the subsample of respondents analyzed in Chapter 7, however, program and control group members differed significantly in terms of their enrollment status at random assignment. In both samples, teens in the program group were more likely to have reported being enrolled at random assignment. They were also more likely to be longer-term dropouts when randomly assigned. Since this difference exists for the full sample as well as for the subset of survey respondents analyzed in the report, it does not appear that this program-control

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[1] The survey sample includes all control group teens and a random sample of 1 in 4 program group teens. See Chapter 2 for more information about the survey and how it was administered.

TABLE B.1

RESPONSE RATES TO THE LEAP SURVEY, BY RESEARCH GROUP

Research Group	Sample Size	Responded to Survey (%)	Responded to Survey and Had 12 or More Months of Follow-up (%)
Program group	1,412	74.4	42.8
Control group	1,396	74.4	41.8
All teens	2,808	74.4	42.3

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: An F-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. No significant differences were found.

TABLE B.2

BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE FULL LEAP SURVEY SAMPLE, BY RESEARCH GROUP

Characteristic	Program Group (%)	Control Group (%)	Total	
Enrollment status				
Enrolled	52.0	49.0	50.5	
Not enrolled	48.0	51.0	49.5	
Enrolled	52.0	49.0	50.5	
Not enrolled, out of school less than one year	17.7	21.6	19.6	**
Not enrolled, out of school one year or more	30.3	29.3	29.8	
Age				
12 to 15	9.8	10.6	10.2	
16 to 17	43.7	43.9	43.8	
18 to 19	46.5	45.5	46.0	
AFDC case status				
Head of own AFDC case	56.0	55.3	55.7	
On other's AFDC case	44.0	44.7	44.3	
Number of children (a)				
No children	9.7	8.8	9.2	
One child	77.4	77.4	77.4	
Two or more children	13.0	13.8	13.4	
County				
Cuyahoga	38.0	37.9	37.9	
Franklin	19.7	19.9	19.8	
Hamilton	21.1	21.3	21.2	
Lawrence	1.6	1.2	1.4	
Lucas	11.0	11.2	11.1	
Muskingum	2.1	1.8	1.9	
Stark	6.6	6.7	6.6	
Sample size	1,412	1,396	2,808	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: A chi-square test was applied to differences between program and control groups in the distributions of these categorical variables (e.g., enrollment status and age). The significance level refers to differences in the distribution of these variables across research groups, as indicated by brackets. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) In September 1990, LEAP eligibility was extended to teens who are pregnant with their first child.

TABLE B.3

BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS FOR LEAP SURVEY RESPONDENTS WITH 12 OR MORE MONTHS OF FOLLOW-UP, BY RESEARCH GROUP

Characteristic	Program Group (%)	Control Group (%)	Total	
Enrollment status				
Enrolled	57.7	54.7	56.2	
Not enrolled	42.3	45.3	43.8	
Enrolled	57.7	54.7	56.2	
Not enrolled, out of school less than one year	13.2	19.7	16.4	***
Not enrolled, out of school one year or more	29.1	25.6	27.4	
Age				
12 to 15	9.6	9.4	9.5	
16 to 17	46.6	44.4	45.5	
18 to 19	43.8	46.1	44.9	
AFDC case status				
Head of own AFDC case	51.4	54.2	52.8	
On other's AFDC case	48.6	45.8	47.2	
Number of children (a)				
No children	6.6	5.7	6.1	
One child	79.8	81.6	80.7	
Two or more children	13.6	12.7	13.1	
County				
Cuyahoga	37.5	38.8	38.1	
Franklin	17.9	18.7	18.3	
Hamilton	20.8	19.4	20.1	
Lawrence	2.0	1.2	1.6	
Lucas	13.1	13.6	13.3	
Muskingum	2.0	2.2	2.1	
Stark	6.8	6.2	6.5	
Sample size	605	583	1,188	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: A chi-square test was applied to differences between program and control groups in the distributions of these categorical variables (e.g., enrollment status and age). The significance level refers to differences in the distribution of these variables across research groups, as indicated by brackets. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

(a) In September 1990, LEAP eligibility was extended to teens who are pregnant with their first child.

difference arose because of differing response patterns by program and control group members. Nonetheless, it represents a significant program-control difference on initial characteristics, making a simple comparison of the mean enrollment levels of the program and control group a potentially invalid estimate of the effect of LEAP on enrollment. However, as discussed earlier, all impacts reported in Chapter 7 are regression adjusted, a process that corrects for observable program-control differences in baseline characteristics. This procedure avoids attributing enrollment differences that are due to program-control differences in observable baseline characteristics to the effect of LEAP (in this case, enrollment status at random assignment). The significant difference in initial enrollment status by research group should, therefore, not bias the enrollment impacts presented in this report.[2] Regression adjustment should preserve the internal validity of the analysis.

II. External Validity of the Results

Table B.4 considers the issue of external validity. Is the subsample of teens analyzed in Chapter 7 representative of the full survey sample, so that the impacts are generalizable to the entire Tier 1 research sample? The second column of the table reports response rates by the subgroups used in Chapter 7. The key subgroups that are underrepresented among survey respondents are teens who had been out of school a year or more when randomly assigned and teens who had two or more children at random assignment. As discussed in Chapter 7, these subgroups correspond roughly to the "on-board" teens (i.e., teens who were LEAP-eligible several months or more before LEAP began operating). LEAP had smaller impacts on these teens, particularly on their high school enrollment.

Given these differential response rates, if the subsample of teens analyzed in Chapter 7 had included *all survey respondents*, then the enrollment impacts (particularly on high school enrollment) would be *overestimated*, since teens with below-average impacts would be underrepresented in the analysis. However, the Chapter 7 research sample does *not* include all survey respondents. Instead, it focuses only on respondents who were surveyed 12 or more months after they were randomly assigned. Because of the way the survey was administered, teens randomly assigned during the first several months of program operations were more likely to have had extended follow-up than other teens. Longer-term dropouts and teens randomly assigned after the birth of their second child were

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[2] It is still possible, even with regression adjustment, that program-control differences in *unobserved* baseline characteristics (i.e., characteristics of the teens not recorded on the baseline information form) may bias the impacts.

TABLE B.4

RESPONSE RATES TO THE LEAP SURVEY, BY SUBGROUP

Characteristic	Sample Size	Responded to Survey (%)		Responded to Survey and Had 12 or More Months of Follow-up (%)	
All teens	2,808	74.4		42.3	
Enrollment status					
Enrolled	1,416	79.8	***	47.2	***
Not enrolled	1,387	69.1		37.5	
Enrolled	1,416	79.8		47.2	
Not enrolled, out of school less than one year	550	73.3	***	35.5	***
Not enrolled, out of school one year or more	834	66.6		39.0	
Age					
12 to 15	286	75.9		39.5	
16 to 17	1,230	74.6		44.0	
18 to 19	1,292	73.8		41.3	
AFDC case status					
Head of own AFDC case	1,563	73.1	*	40.1	***
On other's AFDC case	1,245	76.0		45.1	
Number of children (a)					
No children	258	79.8		28.3	
One child	2,162	75.8	***	44.4	***
Two or more children	374	65.2		41.7	
County					
Cuyahoga	1,065	75.5		42.5	
Franklin	556	70.5		39.0	
Hamilton	596	74.8		40.1	
Lawrence	39	76.9		48.7	**
Lucas	312	76.0		50.6	
Muskingum	54	72.2		46.3	
Stark	186	75.8		41.4	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: An F-test was applied to differences in response rates across subgroups. Statistically significant differences are indicated by brackets. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Sample sizes do not always add up to the full sample of 2,808 because of missing data.

(a) In September 1990, LEAP eligibility was extended to teens who are pregnant with their first child.

concentrated in this early random assignment period (*because* these teens were for the most part the "on-board" teens). For this reason, these subgroups are less underrepresented among the teens analyzed in Chapter 7 than they are among all survey respondents. The last column of Table B.4 illustrates this point. It reports the proportion of each subgroup who were respondents with 12 or more months of follow-up. Teens who were not enrolled at random assignment are still underrepresented, but this underrepresentation is no longer concentrated among longer-term dropouts.

However, the key enrollment impacts (on retention and return) reported in Chapter 7 are unaffected by the underrepresentation of teens who were not initially enrolled, since they are calculated separately for each enrollment status subgroup. This methodology (i.e., estimating impacts separately by initial enrollment status) makes the underrepresentation of teens who were not enrolled at random assignment a less serious problem.

III. Estimating the Amount of Nonresponse Bias

As indicated in Table B.4, there are differences in response rates by other baseline characteristics (specifically, county, case head status, and number of children at random assignment).[3] For this reason, it is still important to consider what impacts would have been if the subsample of teens who were analyzed in Chapter 7 had had baseline characteristics that were identical to the full Tier 1 research sample. Presented below is a procedure to estimate what impacts would have looked like if they could have been estimated for the full survey sample, instead of only survey respondents with 12 or more months of follow-up.

Consider the following regression equation:

$$E_i = \alpha + \beta P_i + \gamma' X_i + \delta' P_i X_i + \epsilon_i \qquad (1)$$

where E_i represents any of the enrollment outcomes presented in Chapter 7 (e.g., average months of enrollment). P_i represents a dummy variable equal to one if the teen is in the program group; X_i represents a vector of dummy variables controlling for baseline characteristics; and P_iX_i represents a vector of interaction terms of the program dummy with these baseline characteristics.[4] Taking the partial derivative of (1) with respect to the program group dummy P_i yields:

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[3] Note that, among respondents with 12 or more months of follow-up, teens who were pregnant with their first child at random assignment are underrepresented (*not* teens who had two or more children at random assignment, as was the case among all survey respondents). Teens were only randomly assigned when pregnant with their first child during the second half of the sample intake period. For this reason, these teens are underrepresented among respondents with extended follow-up.

$$\frac{\partial E_i}{\partial P_i}(X_i) = \beta + \delta' X_i \qquad (2)$$

This derivative represents the predicted effect of LEAP on the enrollment outcome E_i for an individual with baseline characteristics X_i.

In order to estimate the impact of LEAP for the full LEAP survey sample (as opposed to the subsample of respondents with 12 or more months of follow-up), equation (1) is estimated for respondents with 12 or more months of follow-up only (since these are the only teens for whom E_i is observed). Using the estimated regression coefficients (b and d) and substituting in the mean baseline characteristics for the full survey sample, X_f, yields:

$$\frac{\partial E_i}{\partial P_i}(X_f) = b + d' X_f \qquad (3)$$

Equation (3) represents the imputed impact of LEAP on enrollment for the full survey sample.

These imputations are reported in Table B.5. As illustrated in the table, these adjusted full sample impacts are quite similar to those reported in Chapter 7. For those not initially enrolled, the adjusted impacts on high school enrollment are somewhat larger. In general, the adjusted impacts for those not initially enrolled – particularly the adjusted impacts on continuous enrollment and average months of enrollment – look a little more like the impacts for short-term dropouts and less like those of longer-term dropouts. This is owing to the fact (illustrated in Table B.4) that, among survey respondents who were initially not enrolled and who have extended follow-up, it is short-term dropouts (not longer-term dropouts) who are underrepresented.

IV. Generalizability to All LEAP Teens

Impacts adjusted for nonresponse look very much like the actual impacts reported in Chapter 7. This finding suggests that enrollment impacts would have been very similar if it had been possible to estimate these impacts for the full LEAP survey sample. It appears valid, therefore, to consider the results reported in Chapter 7 generalizable to the full Tier 1 LEAP sample described in Chapter 3.

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[4] X_i contains all the baseline characteristics used in the regression adjustment of impacts reported in Chapter 7. In addition to those characteristics in Table B.4, these include ethnicity and marital status.

TABLE B.5

KEY LEAP ENROLLMENT IMPACTS ESTIMATED FOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS WITH EXTENDED FOLLOW-UP AND IMPUTED FOR FULL SURVEY SAMPLE, BY INITIAL ENROLLMENT STATUS

Subgroup and Outcome	Control Group Mean	Estimated Impact for Survey Respondents with Extended Follow-up	Imputed Impact for Full Survey Sample
Teens who were initially enrolled in a school or program			
Enrolled (or completed) 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or adult education	51.1	10.3	10.6
High school	46.9	9.3	9.5
Adult education	3.5	1.9	2.2
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or adult education	7.3	0.9	1.0
High school	6.6	0.7	0.7
Adult education	0.7	0.3	0.3
Teens who were initially not enrolled in a school or program			
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school or adult education	33.4	13.4	15.0
High school	16.2	4.3	5.0
Adult education	17.4	11.1	12.1
Enrolled (or completed) 10 or more months in (%)			
High school or adult education	8.4	9.0	10.0
High school	4.9	5.2	6.0
Adult education	3.5	3.8	4.0
Average months enrolled in or already completed			
High school or adult education	1.9	1.3	1.4
High school	1.0	0.5	0.6
Adult education	0.9	0.8	0.8

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: "Survey respondents with extended follow-up" refers to the 1,188 teens who were surveyed 12 or more months after their random assignment date. This is the research sample used in Chapter 7.

"Full survey sample" refers to the 2,808 respondents and nonrespondents to the survey.

As discussed in the main body of the report, however, there are ways in which the Tier 1 research sample may not be representative of all LEAP teens. The seven counties included in the Tier 1 sample are not perfectly representative of all Ohio counties. These counties overrepresent urban areas, for example. In addition, the research sample contains a large portion of "on-board" teens (i.e., teens who were LEAP-eligible for an extended period of time before they actually entered the program). As discussed in Chapter 7, it appears that LEAP has had smaller impacts on these teens. Presumably, these "on-board" teens are no longer entering the LEAP population in large numbers, since teens should now be identified soon after they become eligible for LEAP. The research sample used in this report, therefore, contains a larger share of "on-board" teens than the share in the current LEAP population.

APPENDIX C

COMPARISON OF SURVEY AND SCHOOL DATA

APPENDIX C

COMPARISON OF SURVEY AND SCHOOL DATA

The enrollment impacts presented in Chapter 7 are based on responses to a survey that was administered to more than 2,000 teens in the seven counties studied for this report. In order to assess whether high school enrollment is overreported in the survey and, more important, whether overreporting is more prevalent among respondents in the program group than those in the control group, survey responses were compared with school records data obtained from the Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Toledo public schools.[1] Table C.1 reports the results of this comparison.

For each of two academic years (1989-90 and 1990-91), all survey respondents who reported being enrolled in a high school or junior high school in each of the specified school districts were identified. An attempt was made to determine whether each of these teens was recorded as enrolled for the academic year in question according to the automated school records file obtained from that district.

This method of "verification" is imperfect because there is strong evidence that the school records are themselves imperfect. For example, teens may be considered "enrolled" by school districts during academic years when they rarely if ever attended school. However, since both program and control group teens were subject to the same definitions and data systems, this type of comparison is a particularly useful way to determine whether there is evidence of differential overreporting of enrollment.

The comparison suggests that the teens' self-reports of their school enrollment are largely consistent with the school records. With the exception of the 1990-91 academic year in Cincinnati, at least 79 percent of the survey self-reports were confirmed by the records. In Toledo, almost all self-reports were confirmed. The comparison does suggest that the 1990-91 file obtained from the Cincinnati school district may have been missing some records.

More important, there is no consistent pattern of differential overreporting by research group. The rate of confirmation was slightly higher for the control group in Cleveland and slightly higher for the program group in Cincinnati. There was virtually no difference in Toledo. Thus, overall, this comparison suggests that the enrollment impacts presented in Chapter 7 are not attributable to overreporting by program group members.

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[1] School records were also obtained from several other school districts, but they are not included in this comparison.

TABLE C.1

COMPARISON OF SURVEY AND SCHOOL RECORDS DATA IN THREE SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE LEAP EVALUATION

	Toledo (Lucas County)			Cincinnati (Hamilton County)			Cleveland (Cuyahoga County)		
Enrollment by Data Source and Academic Year	Program Group	Control Group	Total	Program Group	Control Group	Total	Program Group	Control Group	Total
1989–90 academic year									
Number of survey respondents reporting enrollment in a high school in the targeted district	29	29	58	45	39	84	76	58	134
Of those reporting enrollment, number for whom enrollment is recorded in school records	29	29	58	37	31	68	66	54	120
Percentage of survey respondents reporting enrollment for whom enrollment is recorded in school records	100	100	100	82	79	81	87	93	90
1990–91 academic year									
Number of survey respondents reporting enrollment in a high school in the targeted district	40	43	83	72	61	133	103	72	175
Of those reporting enrollment, number for whom enrollment is recorded in school records	39	41	80	44	38	82	86	65	151
Percentage of survey respondents reporting enrollment for whom enrollment is recorded in school records	98	95	96	61	62	62	83	90	86

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from survey data and automated school records from the Toledo, Cincinnati, and Cleveland public school districts.

APPENDIX D

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES TO CHAPTER 7

TABLE D.1

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 6 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Outcome	Program Group (%)	Control Group (%)	Difference
Ever enrolled in school	58.1	50.0	8.1 ***
Ever enrolled in			
High school	44.8	40.6	4.2 **
ABE/GED	13.4	9.5	3.9 ***
Sample size	1,001	986	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Calculations for this table used data for all sample members for whom there were 6 months of follow-up survey data.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

TABLE D.2

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 6 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, FOR THOSE NOT ENROLLED AT RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Not enrolled in school at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	36.2	24.2	12.0 ***
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	17.8	13.4	4.5 **
ABE/GED	18.3	10.7	7.6 ***
Sample size	432	478	
Not enrolled, out of school less than one year at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	50.1	32.1	18.0 ***
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	32.9	24.6	8.3 *
ABE/GED	17.0	7.7	9.4 ***
Sample size	167	216	
Not enrolled, out of school one year or more at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	26.5	18.6	7.8 **
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	6.9	5.6	1.3
ABE/GED	19.6	12.6	6.9 **
Sample size	265	262	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Calculations for this table used data for all sample members for whom there were 6 months of follow-up survey data.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

TABLE D.3

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 6 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, BY AGE

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Age 12–15 at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	76.1	72.1	4.1
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	74.2	70.1	4.2
ABE/GED	3.0	1.9	1.1
Sample size	98	106	
Age 16–17 at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	67.3	56.8	10.5 ***
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	56.1	48.7	7.4 **
ABE/GED	10.9	7.9	3.0
Sample size	443	428	
Age 18–19 at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	45.1	38.8	6.3 **
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	27.2	26.5	0.7
ABE/GED	18.1	12.7	5.4 **
Sample size	460	452	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Calculations for this table used data for all sample members for whom there were 6 months of follow–up survey data.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two–tailed t–test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

TABLE D.4

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 6 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, BY OTHER KEY SUBGROUPS

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
On own AFDC case at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	48.8	40.0	8.7 ***
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	30.1	28.4	1.7
ABE/GED	18.9	12.0	6.9 ***
Sample size	540	544	
Not on own AFDC case at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	69.6	61.8	7.8 ***
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	62.5	55.2	7.4 **
ABE/GED	7.1	6.4	0.7
Sample size	461	442	
On own AFDC case, age 16-17 at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	60.6	48.8	11.8 **
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	41.6	39.5	2.2
ABE/GED	19.0	9.3	9.6 **
Sample size	128	126	
Not on own AFDC case, age 16-17 at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	70.0	60.0	10.0 ***
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	61.9	52.6	9.3 ***
ABE/GED	7.7	7.2	0.5
Sample size	315	302	

(continued)

TABLE D.4 (continued)

Subgroup and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
No children at random assignment (i.e., pregnant)			
Ever enrolled (%)	63.9	61.0	2.9
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	60.0	54.5	5.5
ABE/GED	6.9	6.4	0.4
Sample size	103	92	
One child at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	60.5	51.1	9.4 ***
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	47.2	42.2	5.1 **
ABE/GED	13.0	9.1	3.9 ***
Sample size	781	776	
Two or more children at random assignment			
Ever enrolled (%)	36.4	35.1	1.3
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	15.6	19.3	−3.6
ABE/GED	21.0	15.6	5.3
Sample size	117	118	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Calculations for this table used data for all sample members for whom there were 6 months of follow−up survey data.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two−tailed t−test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

TABLE D.5

IMPACTS OF LEAP ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT WITHIN 6 MONTHS OF RANDOM ASSIGNMENT, BY COUNTY

County and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Cuyahoga County			
Ever enrolled (%)	57.5	52.8	4.7
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	46.8	43.8	2.9
ABE/GED	10.7	9.3	1.4
Sample size	385	374	
Franklin County			
Ever enrolled (%)	54.7	44.5	10.2 **
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	41.0	36.8	4.2
ABE/GED	14.8	7.7	7.1 **
Sample size	186	187	
Hamilton County			
Ever enrolled (%)	58.6	50.7	7.9 *
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	43.3	38.4	4.9
ABE/GED	15.4	11.4	4.0
Sample size	208	211	
Lucas County			
Ever enrolled (%)	60.5	54.3	6.2
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	41.1	45.0	−3.9
ABE/GED	17.7	10.3	7.4 *
Sample Size	119	116	
Stark County			
Ever enrolled (%)	61.4	39.8	21.6 ***
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	48.0	36.9	11.1
ABE/GED	13.5	4.3	9.2 *
Sample size	68	66	

(continued)

TABLE D.5 (continued)

County and Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Lawrence County			
Ever enrolled (%)	58.4	46.7	11.7
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	58.0	31.8	26.2
ABE/GED	0.4	14.9	−14.6
Sample size	17	13	
Muskingum County			
Ever enrolled (%)	74.5	50.5	24.0
Ever enrolled in (%)			
High school	56.2	36.3	19.9
ABE/GED	27.2	11.1	16.1
Sample size	18	19	

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from Teen Parent Information Sheet and survey data.

NOTES: The proportion ever enrolled in high school and the proportion ever enrolled in ABE/GED programs may sum to more than the proportion ever enrolled in high school or ABE/GED because teens may have enrolled in both high school and an ABE/GED program during the period.

The high school enrollment measures also include junior high school enrollment.

Calculations for this table used data for all sample members for whom there were 6 months of follow-up survey data.

Differences, as well as program and control group means, are regression adjusted to correct for slight differences between the program and control groups in baseline characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between program and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTION OF THE LEAP AND AFDC CASEFILE SAMPLES

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DESCRIPTION OF THE LEAP AND AFDC CASEFILE SAMPLES

The analysis presented in Chapter 5 is based on samples of LEAP and AFDC casefiles, as well as the survey samples, in Ohio's three largest counties: Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton. These samples are as follows:

Sample	Cuyahoga	Franklin	Hamilton
Survey	536	278	298
LEAP casefiles			
full sample	157	113	118
early cohort	109	68	86
AFDC casefiles			
full sample	141	113	28
early cohort	98	68	28

The LEAP casefile sample was the source of data on requested bonuses and sanctions, and the AFDC casefile sample was used to determine the actual number of bonuses and sanctions received. For most purposes, the early cohort subsample was used in making estimates, because it covered at least 18 months following eligibility verification.

LEAP Casefile Sample

The LEAP casefile sample is a random subsample of program group survey sample members (both respondents and nonrespondents) in Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties. In Cuyahoga, the LEAP casefile sample (N=157) is 29 percent of the survey program group; in Franklin (N=113), it is 41 percent; in Hamilton (N=118), it is 40 percent.

Approximately the same number of paper LEAP casefiles were reviewed in each of the three counties. In Cuyahoga, the largest county, additional cases were reviewed because, in addition to paper LEAP casefiles, Cuyahoga maintains a LEAP database that includes information on bonuses and sanctions requested and received. The database was the only source of casefile data for these additional cases.

AFDC Casefile Sample

In Franklin, LEAP casefiles are maintained by the Income Maintenance office, so both LEAP and AFDC casefiles were reviewed together. Bonus and sanction requests were assumed to be identical to actual bonuses and sanctions identified in the AFDC casefiles.

In the other two counties, the AFDC casefile sample is a subsample of the LEAP casefile sample. In general, the paper AFDC casefiles were quite complete. However, enrollment bonuses, which were often paid through a supplemental check, may have been somewhat undercounted.

In Cuyahoga, for cases for which the database information was the only data source, actual bonuses and sanctions may have been undercounted because the database was not always updated when the Income Maintenance office implemented bonuses and sanctions late.

In Hamilton, it was possible to review only 28 AFDC casefiles. However, these cases are all from the early cohort, which is the sample reported in Table 5.3.

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